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BEYOND THE BATTLE'S RIM

IDA WITHERS HARRISON

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BEYOND THE BATTLE'S RIM





BLACKIE, MARY SUE, AND MAMMY VINEY

Frontispiece

BEYOND THE BATTLE'S RIM

A Story of the Confederate Refugees

BY
IDA WITHERS HARRISON



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**TO THREE BELOVED SOLDIERS
WHOSE WARFARE IS NOW ACCOMPLISHED**

**I DEDICATE
THESE MEMORIES OF A GREAT STRUGGLE:**

**MY GRANDFATHER, WILLIAM ALLEN WITHERS,
KILLED AT THE BATTLE OF JACKSON, JULY 12, 1863,**

**MY FATHER, WILLIAM TEMPLE WITHERS,
WHO FOUGHT THROUGH THE MEXICAN AND CIVIL WARS,
AND COMMANDED THE ARTILLERY IN VICKSBURG
DURING THE SIEGE,**

**MY HUSBAND, ALBERT M. HARRISON,
APPOINTED A MIDSHIPMAN IN THE CONFEDERATE NAVY,
IN 1863, AT THE AGE OF THIRTEEN,
AND SERVED UNTIL THE CLOSE OF THE WAR.**

I. W. H.

TO THE CONFEDERATE DEAD

How grand a fame this marble watches o'er!
Their Wars behind them—God's great Peace before.
They fought, they failed, yet, ere the bitter end,
Them, too, did Fortune wondrously befriend.
They never knew, as we who mourn them know,
How vain was all their strife, how vast their woe;
And how the land they gave their lives to save
Returns them all she has to give—a Grave.

GEORGE H. SASS.

BEYOND THE BATTLE'S RIM

CHAPTER I

Spring, with that nameless pathos in the air
Which dwells with all things fair,
Spring, with her golden suns and silver rain,
Is with us once again.
Ah! who could couple thoughts of war and crime
With such a blessed time!
Who in the west wind's aromatic breath
Could hear the call of death!

Henry Timrod.

MRS. CLAIBORNE's high-swung coach, with its spirited bay horses, bowled briskly along the road, through the pleasant spring woods. It was the first of May, 1863, and the children were overflowing with delight at the thought of the happy time before them; for it would take them all day to drive from Jackson to the plantation on the Big Black River, where they were going for a short visit. Uncle Pompey, the coachman, and Tom, the footman, were on the high driver's seat; within were Mrs. Claiborne, the grandchildren,—Peachie and Mary Sue Battle,—and Colonel Battle's sister, Cary, a beautiful young girl, not long home from school in Ken-

tucky. The leather trunk holding their clothes was fastened on behind, and a comfortable-looking hamper, containing their lunch, was strapped to the trunk.

"Oh, Grandma, I am so glad we are going in the carriage, instead of on the cars!" cried Mary Sue. "Just think,—we could get to the plantation in two hours on the cars, and we'll have a whole day riding through the woods this way."

"And we'll eat our lunch under the trees, like a sure enough picnic," chimed in Peachie.

"The cars are so crowded with soldiers and people going to Vicksburg, that it would have been a trying trip," said Mrs. Claiborne. "And then it is nice to have the carriage at the plantation to drive around in."

"And it has been such lovely weather the past week or so," said Cary Battle, "that the roads are quite hard and dry. O, children, if you could see a Kentucky turnpike! They are as smooth as a floor."

"What is a turnpike?" asked Mary Sue. "Is it a road, Aunt Cary?"

"To be sure, honey; but it is not a dirt road like we have in Mississippi, but graded, and spread with cracked rock, so it is good in winter as well as summer."

"But why 'turnpike'?" persisted Mary Sue, who was of an investigating turn of mind.

Cary was at a loss, but Mrs. Claiborne explained.

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"A long time ago in England, when they first made graded roads, they charged travelers a certain sum for using them, which they called 'toll.' When the toll collector, who was armed with a pike, saw a traveler coming, he extended his pike across the road, to remind him that he must pay before he could go further; when the money was paid, the pike was turned, and the traveler could go on his way rejoicing. So it got to be a custom to call all roads 'turnpikes' when toll was charged."

"Oh, there's Grandpa waiting for us!" cried Peachie, leaning out of the carriage window. "I wish he'd let me get out and ride behind him."

Mr. Claiborne, who was not fond of riding in a closed coach, was making the journey on his beautiful Kentucky horse, Prince. He had reached his three-score-and-ten years, but was still erect and vigorous. He was a very rich planter, owning several plantations besides the one on Big Black River. Mrs. Battle was his only daughter, and Peachie and Mary Sue were the idols of his heart and his wife's. In all their many trips, they took sometimes one, oftener both the children with them.

"Come on, then, pet," he called out to the little girl; "but bring the cloth to sit on, or your dress will get soiled."

Getting out of Mrs. Claiborne's coach was not the simple thing that getting out of one of the low-swung vehicles of to-day is. Tom,—the

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footman,—had to jump down from his high seat, open the door, and let down the steps. Peachie, however, scorned steps, so she held out her arms for Tom to swing her down, and when he had placed the cloth on Prince's glossy flanks, he lifted her up behind Mr. Claiborne.

"Oh, Grandpa, how happy I am," she said, as she clasped his waist. "I'd rather be here than anywhere else in the world. Do you know," she said after a pause, "the very first thing I remember in this world is riding on horseback with you?"

"I suspect that is so," he answered; "for you were born on the Grand Gulf plantation, and your father and mother lived there for several years before they moved to Jackson. When I would ride around the place every morning, to see how the hands were working, I would take you with me, long before you were big enough to sit on behind me."

"How sorry I am for little girls who haven't got a grandpa!" she said, giving him a good squeeze.

"How sorry I am for grandpas who haven't got a little girl!" said Mr. Claiborne, returning the squeeze with interest.

"Oh, how sweet the woods are!" cried the child happily.

The woods were sweet,—indeed, it was what Shakespeare calls "The sweet o' the year." The pungent, aromatic odor of the yellow jasmine per-

fumed the air; the deciduous trees were tricked out in all the bravery of their tender green, while the live oaks and magnolias, with long streamers of silvery moss draping their dark, glossy leaves, lent a background of enchantment to the May woods. And the trees were full of tongues,—wrens, mocking birds, red birds, cat birds and brown thrashers sang a morning hymn of praise and joy.

Now and then the travelers would pass out of the forest road into the open, with fields on either side, where the negroes were working and singing, as happy, seemingly, as the birds. Mr. Claiborne paused, as the chorus of a song from a distant group floated to them:

"O dearest May,
You're lovely as the day;
Your eyes so bright,
They shine at night,
When the moon am gone away!"

"What a peaceful scene!" he said, as if to himself. "What a shame that war should come and spread havoc and destruction everywhere!"

"Is war coming right here?" asked the child timidly. "I thought it was away far off, Grandpa."

"God knows, my pet,—don't let's talk about it. But who is that, galloping so fast behind us? Bless my soul, if it isn't Brother Baskett! Why, where are you bound in such a hurry, good preacher?"

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The rider reined up his horse so suddenly that the animal reared on its hind legs. He was a very tall, spare man, with a long beard reaching to his breast. His face was very homely, but his bright blue eyes were wonderfully clear and piercing.

"I'm bound to catch up with you, Brother Claiborne. I heard you were going to the Big Black place, and I came to ride with you. There are some things I must talk over with you."

The preacher paused and wiped his face with a great red handkerchief, then went on impetuously:

"I must get out and do my share, now that fighting is so near. You know our church is small at best—you and I are the only men left. I must shoulder my musket and go to the front."

"What,—a preacher fight!" exclaimed Mr. Claiborne, smiling.

"Why not? Look at Bishop Polk,—a major-general! Surely, a plain Campbellite preacher can fight in the ranks! I am only forty years old, strong as an ox, and have neither wife nor child. And then"—hastily—"I need not actually fight—I can preach to the soldiers; I can help the sick and dying."

"But Jackson is full of soldiers; preach to them."

"Yes, and Jackson may be evacuated any day. By heavens, I will fight, if it is necessary! One thing I will not do any longer,—I will not preach

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to a handful of women and children when brave men are laying down their lives for their country every day. I want your permission,—you're the only elder left in the church,—to go to Vicksburg and join Colonel Battle's regiment. I rode by to see Mrs. Battle, and she said the Colonel was to meet you at the plantation in the morning. I'll lay the matter before him there."

The two speakers had entirely forgotten Peachie in the stern matters before them. To the child, war so far had meant only gallant soldiers on dress parade, with banners flying and bands playing; but a vague fear of something, she knew not what, fell on her as she listened, and she asked again:

"Grandpa, is war coming right here? Will papa be in the fighting?"

"Why, bless the child! What a shame for us to be scaring her!" said Mr. Claiborne tenderly. "There are some more darkies singing in that field. Can you make out what it is, pet?"

"Oh, it's the 'Jonah Song,' " she returned smiling.

Pausing a moment, they heard the refrain:

"On the hallelujah strand,
I'll take Jonah by the hand,
And he'll tell me all about it,
Over there."

"Good advice!" said the preacher, keeping time to the music. "Instead of fussing with each

other about Jonah and the whale, let's wait for him to tell us all about it over there."

"But that won't work,—if the Book of Jonah is a parable or an allegory, as you think,—for then, the prophet is not a real person, so we won't meet him on the hallelujah strand. But, aren't you tired of riding on Prince's hot back, sweetie girl? Suppose you get back in the carriage with Mary Sue."

"Prince's back is hot,—and how he perspires!" said Peachie, candidly. "Oh, Uncle Pompey, stop and let me in!"

The change to the cool, comfortable coach diverted the child's mind from serious thoughts; but still a shadow seemed to have fallen on the gay, bright forest, and she sat quietly, listening to Grandma's and Aunt Cary's pleasant talk and Mary Sue's happy chatter. Presently their voices grew faint and far away, and she fell sound asleep.

The stopping of the coach and Tom opening the door waked her, and she cried out in joyful excitement:

"We're stopping for lunch,—aren't we, Grandma? I'm so glad and so hungry."

"Yes, sleepy head," said Mrs. Claiborne, as Tom helped her down the steps. "Don't you remember the spring, and the live-oak trees, where we always stop?"

It was a lovely, sylvan spot; the stately trees, with some wild-plum bushes in full bloom at one

side, gave grateful shade, while the spring of clear water was but a little distance off. Instantly, all was pleasant bustle and preparation for the midday meal. Uncle Pompey and Tom unstrapped the big hamper, and then took the horses out for their needed food and rest.

Mr. Baskett, who was a prime favorite with all, especially with the children, took the lead in unpacking the basket and spreading the contents on the white cloth that was laid on the grass.

"Where is that lazy ducky?" he called out. "You, Tom,—where are you going?"

"I ain' gwine nowhar,—I done been whar I'm gwine," answered Tom, coming up with a bucket of water from the spring. "Want me to wait on table, Ole Miss?"

"No, we can wait on ourselves,—everything is right here. You go and help Uncle Pompey with the horses," said Mrs. Claiborne.

Mr. Baskett asked a fervent blessing, and as the party fell to with hungry zest, he remarked,

"Little Jack Yerger took dinner at our house the other day, and after I said grace, he looked so surprised that I inquired if they didn't ask a blessing at his house. 'No, sir!' he replied; 'we say our prayers at night; that's the most dangerous time!' That's a good many people's idea of prayer,—something to get them out of tight places and bring confusion on their enemies."

"Ought to be plenty of prayers in war

time, then," said Mrs. Claiborne. "Have some chicken, Brother Baskett?"

"I will," responded the preacher, handling a brisk knife and fork. "No such fried chicken in Mississippi as your cook turns out, Sister Claiborne. The only thing that touches it is your dressed ham. What do you do to give it such a flavor?"

"I always bake it, as well as boil it," said Mrs. Claiborne, helping him bountifully, "and after rubbing it well with sugar and spices I pour a bottle of sherry over it. Have some beaten biscuit and pickles?"

"Something of everything in sight," he responded. "It takes a man who lives in a boarding house to appreciate good rations like these."

"Don't they feed you well at your house?" asked Mrs. Claiborne with solicitude. "Mrs. Sizer is a member of our church, and such a good woman."

"She is," agreed Mr. Baskett, "but I can't eat her. Unfortunately, her fare is not so good as she is. But don't let's darken this feast with thoughts of boarding houses. Why didn't Mrs. Battle and Blackie come? I did not take time to ask them."

"You know she has that wounded Kentucky soldier from General Breckinridge's staff staying in the house. She dresses his leg every day, and wouldn't leave him alone to the servants,—and Blackie would not leave her."

"Good boy," said the preacher approvingly,—
"fine, manly fellow! Thank goodness, though,
he's too young to go in the army."

"He's just twelve, but he thinks he's grown
up," said Mary Sue, with sisterly candor. "He
just begged papa to let him go to Vicksburg with
him."

"I wish they could have come," said Mr. Bas-
kett. "Things are getting so warm about Vicks-
burg, I don't know when Colonel Battle can come
up to Jackson again. How long will he stay at
the plantation, Brother Claiborne?"

"Only a few hours. He'll ride over,—it's
only twelve miles,—and we'll decide about send-
ing the negroes to Grand Gulf, or keeping them
there. He wrote that he'd bring Ned Chichester
with him, Cary."

Though Cary's lovely face flushed, she said
nothing; but the two little girls uttered exclama-
tions of pleasure. Lieutenant Chichester was a
nephew of Mr. Claiborne's, whom the planter
had taken into his family and brought up as a
son.

The afternoon passed quickly and pleasantly.
The travelers varied the monotony by changing
around—Mary Sue took her turn at riding be-
hind her grandfather, and Cary Battle, who was
a fearless horsewoman, mounted Mr. Baskett's
horse (sitting as easily on his high, cavalry sad-
dle as on her own dainty side-saddle), while the
preacher rode in the coach with Mrs. Claiborne

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and Peachie. Their frequent laughter was the usual tribute to his dry, humorous talk,—for he was a man of infinite jest.

It was sunset when the party reached the big gate at the entrance to the plantation. A half-dozen little darkies were waiting to open it, and called out in chorus:

"Howdy, Ole Marse! Howdy, Ole Miss! Howdy, Miss Cary! Howdy, Marse Basket! Howdy, Miss Peachie! Howdy, Mary Sue——!"

"*Miss Peachie*," cried Mary Sue indignantly. "I'm as much a miss as she is,—she's only one year older than I am. Who told you to say '*Miss Peachie*,' Buck?" she called down to a grinning little chap, who ran along the broad driveway beside them.

"Mr. Flippen. He says we all gotter say '*Miss Peachie*' now, cause she's the oldes'. Howdy, Uncle Pompey! Howdy, Tom!"

Mr. Flippen,—the big, bluff, good-natured overseer,—was on the steps of the mansion, waiting for them, and behind him, the cook and housemaids, wearing immaculate white aprons, their heads tied up in resplendent bandanna handkerchiefs.

"All the hands from the quarters wanted to come up and see you," said Mr. Flippen, as he shook hands all around, "but I told 'em they must wait till after supper. I knowed you'd be

tired after your long ride, so I just let Aunt Mimy and the girls come out."

"I think we'd better wait till morning to have them come up, Flippen," said Mr. Claiborne. "Colonel Battle is going to ride over from Vicksburg to-morrow, and he may want to say something to them. You needn't send the hands to the fields to-morrow,—they can have a holiday."

The little girls were tired from their long drive, and after Aunt Mimy's bountiful supper they were very glad to get in the great mahogany bed in which they were to sleep. They could hear the murmur of voices from the big verandah downstairs, where Mr. Flippen was talking with their grandfather and Mr. Baskett. Soon Mrs. Claiborne and Cary Battle came up to their bedrooms, and all was still in the house, except the grave tones of the three men, discussing the crisis that was before them.

CHAPTER II

Swing low, sweet chariot.
You're comin' for to carry me home;
Swing low, sweet chariot,
You're comin' for to carry me home.
Old Negro Hymn.

THE next morning they had a delightful surprise. About nine o'clock, the decrepit station hack drove up, and out of it jumped, first Blackie, and then their mother. Mrs. Battle explained that in some way Captain Bedford, the wounded soldier in their home, had heard that Colonel Battle was going to ride over to the plantation from Vicksburg; and when he found she was staying at home on his account, he had urged and implored her so to go that she had finally consented.

"So I changed the bandages on his leg before breakfast, and Blackie and I came down on the morning train, and we're going back this evening," she said, with Mary Sue on her lap, and Peachie hanging on her chair. "And I did want to see your father, children,—I don't know when he'll be able to come to Jackson again. He'll be coming along pretty soon now, I expect."

"Here he comes now!" shouted Blackie, who

was sitting on the gate-post like a sentinel, watching for his father.

Sure enough, they could hear the ring of horses' hoofs, and soon the two soldiers galloped up and dismounted. There were the clinging embraces of those separated by war,—those brief and precious greetings, with their mingled joy of meeting and pathos of parting, with ever in the background the tragic fear that this might be the last!

"You look thin, Charlton," said Mrs. Battle to her husband when he let her go. "Are you well? Is he well, Ned? He'll never confess that he's sick."

"He's well enough, Cousin Sally, but he works himself to death," said the young soldier, holding Cary's hand for an unnecessarily long time. "Didn't sleep much last night,—did you, Colonel?"

"Well, not a great deal," confessed Colonel Battle. "This little furlough gave me extra work to do. But I'm all right. And you, Mother,—you don't let yourself fret and worry, do you? Blackburn, you watch her, don't you, and take care of her?"

"I try to," said Blackie, his heart swelling with pride at his soldier father's trust in him. "I wouldn't leave her yesterday," he said with a boy's boastfulness, "when she wouldn't come with Grandma and Grandpa."

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And then the story was told of their coming down on the cars just for the day.

"I am so thankful you came, Mother," said Colonel Battle. "They're closing in on us,—I don't know when I can leave Vicksburg again. A courier from General Bowen at Grand Gulf brought word last night that Grant had crossed the Mississippi River,—just below the town,—day before yesterday, and moved on to Port Gibson, and Bowen was going to meet him there at the bridge over Bayou Pierre. The courier thought a battle must have been fought there yesterday. At any rate, Bowen sent word that he could not hold Grand Gulf against Admiral Porter's fleet and General Grant's army. He has only about six thousand men. After burning the bridge at the bayou, he will probably come on to Vicksburg and join Pemberton."

"Grand Gulf evacuated!" exclaimed Mr. Claiborne. "Then the plantation there is in the enemy's lines,—and two hundred bales of cotton in the gin!"

"We'll see that the cotton here doesn't fall into their hands," said Colonel Battle grimly. "We have two years' crops here. How many bales are there, Mr. Flippen?"

"About four hundred," said the overseer, "and as fine cotton as ever was raised in Big Black country."

"We were talking last night of moving the negroes here to the Grand Gulf place," said Mr.

Claiborne; "but this news puts an end to that. There will be fighting all around here soon."

"Yes, and with Grant and his big army on this side of the Mississippi, it may begin any day," said Colonel Battle. "You must start back to Jackson early in the morning, Mr. Claiborne. It is not safe to be driving through the country with the enemy so near. Mr. Flippen, suppose you ring the bell for all the hands to come up to the back porch."

"Children, I think you had better go down in the woods and hunt sweet gum," said Mrs. Battle, looking wistfully at their wondering faces. "Ned, wouldn't you and Cary like to go with them?"

"Oh, yes, Cousin Sally!" said Lieutenant Chichester eagerly. "You will come, won't you, Cary?"

"I suppose so," said Cary, who had turned very pale during the conversation.

The big plantation bell was already ringing, and the children would have preferred to stay and see what was going on; but in that day, and in that family, unquestioning obedience was the law.

Their way led through the negro quarters, a few hundred yards back of the mansion. The quarters were two rows of neat, whitewashed cabins, facing one another, with a wide street between. The negro men were marching up the street, with the foreman, Uncle George, in the lead. The women and children were sitting in

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their doors, enjoying their holiday; some were sewing, some picking greens for dinner, some were knitting, and some engaged in the weekly job of combing and "wroppin'" their children's hair, an operation accompanied by a vigilant search for any live residents in the bushy little heads. The holiday was by no means a time of revelry for the youth of the quarters, for the process of tightly wrapping the pigtails of fuzzy hair with strips of cotton was acutely uncomfortable. Every group had its cheerful greeting to the children and the handsome young couple. What a happy, friendly, childlike race they were! Taking no thought (and having no need to take thought) for the morrow, its food, its raiment, or its shelter!

"Oh, here's Aunt Keziah!" cried Blackie, stopping before a cabin, with a gourd-vine beginning to climb over its little front porch. "Where's Buck, Aunt Keziah? Can't he go with us and show us where the sweet-gum trees are?"

Aunt Keziah, who was working hard on a woolly little head, called out in a warning voice:

"Don't come a-nigh this nigger, Marse Blackie; I done kilt forty leven boogers in his haid already,—he's sholy scanlous! I lay I wrop your hair so tight this time no boogers will git in it! Buck's gone to the big house for our rations. Yon' he comes now. You nigger, you, put dat bacon an' meal an' 'lasses in de kitchen, an' go long wid de white folks to hunt gum,—

an'mine, you takes your manners 'long wid you!"

Buck executed a skip of joy before he disappeared into the cabin, put away his "rations," then walked with the children sedately enough so long as he was within the range of his mammy's eyes.

Back of the quarters was a strip of woodland, running down to the Big Black River. As the young people entered its pleasant shade, they had a feeling of coming into a new and far-off world, though the house and the quarters and all the plantation buildings were but a short distance off.

"How sweet and peaceful it is!" said the young soldier, taking off his cap. "What a contrast to Vicksburg, with its noisy crowds! Let's sit on this log, Cary, while the children hunt for their sweet gum. There's a group of the trees down by the river. How beautiful they are!"

Cary, taking a seat beside young Chichester, said demurely:

"Are there many pretty girls in Vicksburg, Ned?"

"I have neither time nor thought for any pretty girls,—but one," said Ned, looking at her with his heart in his eyes. "You know, Cary, that you are the one girl in the world for me."

Cary tossed her head and pouted her lips. Truth to tell, the incense and admiration that had been showered on her since she came home from school, six months before, had turned her pretty head a little.

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"Ah, Cary," he said, "I hear of the crowd of officers that flock to see you every night! And that Englishman,—that correspondent of the *London Graphic*,—they say he is clean daft about you."

"Nonsense!" said Cary, blushing brightly. "He's the son of a baronet, you know, Ned. You would be pleased to have me become Lady Cary Jermyn,—wouldn't you?"

"How can you have the heart to trifle with me so, Cary? I thought you cared a little for me last fall?"

"O Ned, you are so young!" said Cary (who was seventeen), with a very mature air. She was thinking of the bronzed men of the world who had been pouring flatteries into her vain little ears for the past few months.

"I am twenty-one," said the soldier, quietly, "and time, especially a time such as this, ages men fast. I was in hopes you could give me some hope before fighting begins; I could go into battle with better strength and courage, if I knew your heart was mine."

Cary was touched, and she might have given him some words of good hope,—but just then the children ran up, displaying their spoils.

"Just look at this lovely yellow jasmine, Aunt Cary!" cried Peachie. "Buck climbed a tree and got it for me. And we found some sweet shrub bushes,—my handkerchief is full of the blooms. Don't they smell good?"

"Delicious," said Cary. "Why, it's calicanthus; I didn't know they grew wild here."

"Yes'm, they does," said Buck, bashfully taking a handful out of his pocket, and presenting them to her. "The more you squeezes 'em, the sweeter they gits."

"And, Aunt Cary, just look what a splendid box full of gum I've got," cried Mary Sue. "Take some,—have a chew, Cousin Ned."

"Not me," said Ned, "I know how hard it sticks to your teeth, and how hard it is to get off."

"That's the truth," agreed Blackie dismally. "My teeth are so stuck up now, I don't believe I shall ever get 'em clean again."

"That's because you're such a greedy boy, and take such big mouthfuls," said Peachie in a superior manner. "I picked out the hard pieces, and just took a little at a time, and mine doesn't stick at all. Have some out of my box, Aunt Cary. Buck got it for me, and it's the best of all."

"People always get the best for you, because you've got curly hair," grumbled Mary Sue. "Gracious! my teeth are stuck together. What can I do?"

"If you chaws a piece er cotton, the gum'll stick to it," advised the experienced Buck. "Sposin' we run to the gin-house, we can git some right clean cotton there."

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The four children started off on a run before Lieutenant Chichester could stop them.

"Let's run after them," he said to Cary. "The Colonel did not want them around, while they set fire to the cotton. He thought they might be in the way."

"Set fire to the cotton!" exclaimed Cary, as they ran after the children. "Why do brother and Uncle Claiborne want to burn up the cotton? It's worth thousands of dollars!"

"General Grant and his army are coming. They have already got the Grand Gulf cotton. There is no use making them a present of the Big Black crop."

They had lost sight of the children, for Buck had dived into a byway to the gin-house, and they could not stop them; a sudden turn brought them in sight of the great building.

Heavy volumes of black smoke, pierced by leaping forks of flame, poured from the roof. Colonel and Mrs. Battle, her mother and father, and Mr. Baskett stood in a group on one side, watching the burning building with white, set faces. A line of negro men, with buckets of water in their hands, stood ready to keep the fire from spreading to adjacent houses, with Mr. Flippen at one end of the line, and Uncle George at the other, to give orders when necessary. Fortunately, there was no wind, and all that was needed was to watch the up-streaming sparks, and see that no inflammable material caught from

them. Cary Battle ran up, panting and weeping, and threw herself in her brother's arms.

"O, Papa," cried Peachie and Mary Sue, "how did the gin catch on fire?"

Mrs. Battle clasped the little girls in her arms, while Blackie looked mutely into his father's face.

"We set it on fire, my son," said Colonel Battle, pressing Cary to his breast. "General Grant and his army will be all over this country in a little while. We did not care to make them a present of thousands of dollars,—to help them keep up the war against us."

Mr. Claiborne's face, generally so serene and benignant, now looked stern and stricken with sudden age, and he said in a broken voice:

"A two-years' crop going up in this smoke! Grand Gulf, Pointe Coupée, Tensas plantations,—all in the enemy's lines! The fortune of a lifetime is gone, Old Lady. God knows what will become of us all!"

Mrs. Claiborne burst into loud weeping and clung to her husband as she cried incoherently:

"It's not right for them to come down to our country,—to kill our people,—to take our servants and our property from us! What shall we do,—what shall we do!"

"We'll fight 'em like fury, Aunt Susan," said Ned Chichester, flashing a stern look into Colonel Battle's eyes.

"The day's past for able-bodied men to be wasting time in talk," said Mr. Baskett, with the

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grim joy of coming battle in his eyes. "Vicksburg and the rifle-pits for me,—preacher or no preacher!"

The mounting flames of the burning cotton had overcome the sullen smoke, and a solid wall of fire now soared up through the still, morning air. The women and children from the quarters stood watching from a distance, and suddenly a few of them began one of the weird, rhythmic chants that negroes love. A few men from the fire-guard joined in, then others, until all united in one splendid volume of antiphonal song,—the deep harmony of the men's voices being answered by the sweet, shrill notes of the women and children. The roar of the flames added its accompaniment, while now and then the crash of falling timbers added a tragic burst of discord to the measured cadence of the song.

The children looked wonderingly into the set faces of the older people, as they listened and watched. Perhaps Mr. Claiborne, with the experience of his long life behind him, felt most deeply the significance of the moment. Back of the dusky figures before him he dimly saw a cloud of other dark faces, of other places, and other years,—faces that had looked to him for guidance and support, as might children to a father. In the sweet voices of the singers he could hear the songs of long ago,—the happy chant of the workers in the cotton- and sugar-cane-fields, the evening song in the quarters, the solemn fervor

of the religious hymns of a child-like, pleasure loving, warm-hearted people, who went singing through life! He had always accepted the care of so many of these children of nature,—some of them but little removed from barbarism,—as a solemn trust and responsibility; his relations with them had been as those of a patriarch to his tribe, or of a father to his family.

It was, then, not only the loss of fortune that moved him so deeply; it was the passing of the old order of things in which his useful and honored life had been set,—the coming chaos and change! His and his wife's closing years, instead of sailing through familiar and peaceful channels into a quiet sea, were to be tossed on dark and turbulent waters, with no haven of rest before them!

Suddenly he felt Peachie's soft hand tugging at his, as her troubled eyes searched his working face.

"What is it, Grandpa?" she begged. "I love you; don't cry."

Mr. Claiborne pressed the dear little hand, feeling a vague comfort in its tender warmth, and said:

"The fire is dying down some; let us go back to the house. Mr. Flippen and George can direct the hands and watch the sparks."

On their return Aunt Mimy had one of her famous dinners awaiting them, and the children and Mr. Baskett did ample justice to it; but the older

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folks could eat but little; they felt the shadow of the hour,—the passing of the old happy, easy times,—the coming of the new and unknown; above all, the parting with the dear soldiers. When would they look on their faces again!

After dinner they went into the big, dim parlor, and knelt down; and the good preacher asked a Father's blessing on those who were returning home, and for His protecting care over those who were going to fight their country's battles. And a martial ring came to his voice as he pleaded for victory over the enemies of the South, and that the invaders might be driven out of their beloved land.

"You feel that you had better go to Vicksburg with Ned and me, Brother Baskett?" asked Colonel Battle. "Then hadn't you better go back to Jackson for your clothes and books?"

"Not with Yankees on this side of the river, and the smell of battle in the air," retorted the preacher in warlike tones. "Mrs. Battle has promised to send all my clothes, except my preaching suit, down by train in the morning; there are not many of them. And she'll take care of my books, too."

"It is time for us to start," said Colonel Battle, as their horses were brought around. "Keep a brave heart, Mother. Blackburn, look after your mother and sisters. Good-bye. God bless and keep every one of you!"

In the parting tears and embraces, Ned not

only kissed Mrs. Claiborne and Mrs. Battle and the little girls, but dared to take Cary in his arms and snatch one kiss from her. As he and Colonel Battle and Mr. Baskett galloped off, Uncle Pompey drove up with the coach to take Mrs. Battle and Blackie to the train, so there was no time for lamentations.

Mrs. Battle was a woman of remarkable courage, and the discipline of two years of war had trained her in self-control and self-reliance.

"You'll start back early in the morning, Pa," she said to Mr. Claiborne, as he helped her in the carriage. "You know that Charlton said you ought to get back as soon as possible, with the enemy so near; I shall look for you to-morrow afternoon. Be good little girls, children, and don't give your grandma any trouble."

CHAPTER III

Know'st thou that balmy Southern land,
By myrtle crowned, by zephyrs fanned,
Where verdant hills and forests grand
Smile 'neath an azure dome?
O sunny land, for thy sweet sake
A thousand tender memories wake;
For thee my heart is like to break,
Far—far from home.

S. M. Peck.

THE next morning, Aunt Mimy gave them a five o'clock breakfast, so they could make an early start. As the carriage drove away, Mr. Claiborne paused at the front gate to take a last look at the beautiful old mansion with its broad, pillared portico, the negro quarters nestling like a little village behind, the comfortable out-buildings, and the wide, fertile acres bathed in the golden May sunshine. Here and there could be seen glimpses of the Big Black, shining like silver through its fringing woodlands. Only one thing marred the peaceful beauty of the scene,—a sluggish, sinister column of smoke, rising from the ruins of the fire of yesterday.

Mr. Claiborne's heart was heavy as he galloped up to the coach; but he showed a brave and smiling face to those within. The shadow of yesterday was lifted from the children, and they

enjoyed the fresh morning, the fragrant forest, the swift motion, to the full.

They reached Jackson early in the afternoon, and found Mrs. Battle and Blackie waiting for them when they drove up.

"Thank God, you are safe home!" she said, hugging the children and kissing Cary as they alighted. "Stop and take supper with us, Ma. Aunt Dilsey is not expecting you home so soon. When I told her you would be back to-day she wouldn't believe me, and said you told her you would be gone three or four days."

"She's as hard-headed a ducky as ever lived," returned Mrs. Claiborne. "But we must be getting home. What's the news, Sally?"

"Charlton was right, General Bowen has evacuated Grand Gulf; he had a battle with General Grant at Port Gibson day before yesterday, burnt the bridge over Bayou Pierre, so as to stop the advance of the Yankees awhile, retreated in good order, and by now is with Pemberton at Vicksburg. Sherman has left the Yazoo and joined Grant, and they will probably march on to Raymond, as soon as they can bridge the bayou."

"Would to God we had some one else in command than Pemberton! If Joe Johnston were only here!" said Mr. Claiborne. "Our troops are so scattered,—at Raymond, at Haines Bluff, at Port Hudson, at Jackson, at Vicksburg! If Grant attacks us in detail, we stand no chance."

"It was rumored last night, that General

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Johnston had been ordered here to take command of this department," said Mrs. Battle.

"I pray that it may be true," breathed her father fervently.

"Which of the children is coming over to-night?" asked Mrs. Claiborne.

"I believe it is Peachie's time," said Mrs. Battle. "I will send her over just as soon as Mammy Viney has bathed her and changed her clothes."

Mr. Claiborne and Colonel Battle had beautiful suburban homes just outside the town of Jackson. Colonel Battle's place was situated in the angle of the roads that led to Vicksburg in one direction and to Canton in the other, and the Claiborne home adjoined his. Both dwellings had spacious grounds, with beautiful shrubberies and gardens and orchards, Mr. Claiborne's having a deer park as well. The little girls took time about spending the night with their grandfather, and never thought of questioning the arrangement. In her heart, Peachie felt she would rather have stayed at home that night, for her Aunt Cary was the belle of Jackson, and wherever she was there were gay young girls, with handsome soldiers in attendance. She never dreamed of protesting, however, but could not help saying privately and gloomily to Mary Sue:

"I'll bet Mr. Jermyn will bring his guitar, and Captain Pat Henry his banjo, and they'll sing 'Juanita' and 'Ever of Thee,' and all the songs I love."

"Yes, and there's going to be a serenade to-night," said Mary Sue in heartless glee. "Aunt Cary got word just now from that English Mr. Jermyn; and Miss Rosalie Petrie and Miss Nettie Colquhon are going to stay all night."

"Don't tell me anything else," said Peachie, consumed with envy. "They always sing 'Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming' at serenades, and that is my favorite piece. Mamma says I must tell Captain Bedford good-night. I'll go right now."

Colonel Battle was a Kentuckian, and had moved to Mississippi, when he married the rich planter's daughter. He had many friends and relations in General Breckinridge's command, and his home was always open to them. When he heard that an old acquaintance, Captain Bedford, was lying sick in the hospital, he had him moved to his house. He was a member of General Breckinridge's staff, and had been shot in the leg, and it had been amputated at the knee.

The wounded soldier was in an upstairs bedroom, sitting by his window, watching the full moon as it floated up the pink eastern sky, when Peachie entered. The gentle, pretty child was a great favorite of his, and he kissed her tenderly.

"The house has been lonely without my little girls," he remarked. "You don't know how I have missed you. Tell me all about your trip, and the plantation, and the darkies."

"I can't tell you to-night," answered Peachie.

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"This is my night over at Grandpa's, and I must go before dark."

"Now, that's a real blow to me!" exclaimed the soldier, his hand on her bright curls. "And I wanted so much to hear you sing 'Come, dearest, the daylight is gone.'"

This song was Peachie's masterpiece, and Captain Bedford called for it every evening.

"I haven't time to sing it to-night," she returned with a sigh. "But you'll have plenty of singing,—they're going to serenade Aunt Cary to-night."

"Little do I care for men's singing—they do nothing but make a big noise! My little girl can beat them all. Well, good-night, if you must go."

And as he kissed her in farewell, he thought wistfully of his little daughter in far-off Kentucky, whom he had not seen for nearly two years.

Peachie ran down the steps and out in the backyard to "pass the time o' day" (as the darkies said) with her boon companion Lilian, Aunt Ginsy's daughter. She found her nursing her baby brother, who was named Battle of Manassas, because he was born on the day that great victory was won. He was called "Manassas," for short, and was a great pet with all the Battle family.

Peachie was delighted to find that Lilian was going over to her grandmother's with her, to

carry a bowl of strawberries for supper. Lilian, —who was as black as ink, in spite of the romantic name her fond parents had bestowed upon her,—was supposed to belong to Peachie, but those who knew their relations intimately said it looked more as if Peachie belonged to her.

Peachie's drooping spirits rose under the spell of Lilian's graphic recital of the events that had happened during the two days they had been gone.

"Laws, chile, you sholy miss a lot by goin' away," said the colored girl as she and Peachie entered Mr. Claiborne's beautiful grounds. "Pappy, he done whipped Pet 'in an inch of his life, 'cause he runned off to dress p'rade; he certainly squalled scanlous. An' the sojers has been marchin' up and down the streets, an' the band playin', an' the ars'nal done 'sploded——"

"Done what, Lilian?" asked Peachie, aghast.

"Done blowed up," said Lilian, who reveled in tidings of disaster. "Some sojer was smokin', an' a spark fell in the powder, an' up she went! Lots an' lots of people was kilt. Pet ran off agin, spite of his spankin', an' I went with him," she admitted in a burst of candor, "but nobody never noticed us—they was arms and legs an' heads jess layin' roun' loose,—'twas jess grand!"

"I wouldn't have seen it for a million dollars," said Peachie, shuddering. "Did it make a noise, Lilian?"

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"Noise, chile! You never heard nothin' like it; it was like the bigges' clap o' thunder ever was,—an' the ground jess shook! You missed the time of your life by bein' away."

Lilian was so triumphant and superior because of her thrilling experience that Peachie launched out into a description of the burning of the cotton and gin at the plantation, to show that she had had adventures also.

"Yon's Ole Miss on the back gall'ry, watchin' for you," said Lilian. "I speck supper's ready and waitin'."

Supper was ready, and Mr. and Mrs. Claiborne were full of distress at the terrible explosion of the arsenal, and the dreadful death of all who were in, or near, the building. They tried to keep the grim details in the background as much as possible, so as not to make the child unhappy, and changed the subject as soon as possible.

"Do you know," said Mr. Claiborne, "that two little new fawns came in the deer park while we were away, and the little mother is just as proud as she can be?"

"O Grandpa, I am so glad! Do let's go and see them—I think little fawns are the sweetest things in the world," cried Peachie, full of enthusiasm, and forgetting all about soldiers, and serenades, and arsenals, in this new excitement.

"It is too late to go in the park to-night," answered her grandpa. "We'll go in the morning

with Pompey, when he feeds them. The old stag might get after us, if we came up on him 'unbeknownst' as Pompey says."

"Yes," said Grandma, laughing heartily, "I remember one time he ran your Cousin Ned up a tree, and stood under it, pawing his feet and tossing his antlers, so that Ned didn't dare venture down; finally, Pompey went over on the other side of the park, as he does when he feeds the deer, and the old fellow went over to get his dinner; and Master Ned came down in such a towering rage, that he wanted to get his gun, and shoot him, and your grandpa had to threaten to whip him, before he would give in."

"Whip Cousin Ned!" cried Peachie, incredulous. "Why, he's ever so much bigger and taller than Grandpa!"

"Yes, but he was a boy then," answered Grandma. "He wasn't as big as you are, child, when his father and mother died, and he came to live with us."

"Well, if I can't go in the park to see the baby fawns, can I go with you to the storeroom, when you give out breakfast, Grandma?" asked Peachie.

Mrs. Claiborne nodded as she took her key-basket; for, like the lady in King Lemuel's oracle, she looked well to the ways of her household, and all the food used on her table, as well as by her large establishment of servants, was given out by her daily from storeroom and smoke-house.

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Peachie loved to go in the ample and orderly storeroom. Everything was bought in quantity, for many mouths had to be fed every day, in the generous housekeeping of those times. On the top shelf, was a row of loaves of white sugar, each one done up in its blue paper cover. Peachie and Mary Sue used to think they looked like the tall caps the grenadiers in their picture books wore; they loved to be by when Tom, the footman, took a loaf down and broke it up into pieces for use. Then there were barrels of flour, sacks of coffee, curious Chinese boxes of tea, and in one special corner several barrels of pecans from the Louisiana plantations. The little girls were always allowed to put their hands in one of the barrels, and take one handful out, whether they were hungry or not, and to-day was exactly like any other.

"Have you been to the smoke-house, Grandma?" asked Peachie, putting her pecans in her apron pocket.

"Yes, child, thank goodness!" said Mrs. Claiborne, locking the storeroom door, and putting the key in her basket.

"Make some waffles for breakfast, Dilsey, and have some fried grits, and broil your chickens,—and mind you have them a nice brown. Well, I am glad to sit down and rest. Run and crack your pecans, Peachie. Don't let me see you crack one with your teeth."

Peachie was eleven years old, and getting to be a big girl, but she loved to cuddle up on her grandpa's lap of an evening. It was a perfect moonlight night, and the beautiful grounds with their cape jessamine hedges, the crêpe myrtle trees, bursting into a mist of pink blossoms, and the scent of roses from the flower-garden, made as fair a scene as one often sees in this world. Presently the tinkle of a guitar was heard from the Battle verandah, and Peachie cried:

"That's Mr. Jermyn,—I knew he'd be up to see Aunt Cary to-night, though he is going to serenade her after everybody goes to bed. He never sings anything but love songs. I wish Captain Pat Henry would sing: he likes war songs, and so do I."

Sure enough, the young Englishman was singing "How Can I Leave Thee," and his mellow tenor voice sounded sweetly in the still night air. That air finished, he sang "Juanita," every one joining in the chorus.

"Oh, I'm so glad Captain Pat is going to sing," said the child, as a stronger hand began preluding on the guitar. "It's 'Maryland' he's playing. I'm so glad,—I love it!"

It was so quiet that those listening could even hear the words:

"The despot's heel is on thy shore,
Maryland, my Maryland;
His torch is at thy temple door,
Maryland, my Maryland."

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Grandpa sighed, as one after another of the beloved songs of love and war drifted over from the neighboring house. He knew the rude awakening from these peaceful nights of song and love-making must soon come; but he said nothing, only pressed the dear little figure more closely to him.

"I think somebody's ready for bed, Old Lady," he said. "We'll all go to sleep early to-night,—it's been a long day."

Peachie was glad to creep into her trundle-bed, which was rolled out every night from under the great mahogany four-poster, where her grandmother and grandfather slept.

Her journey to the plantation and all that had happened colored her dreams, however, and made her restless. Now and then she would wake with a start and reach out in the dark,—always to find her grandmother's soft hand hanging over the bedside, ready to clasp hers. Then the child would sink back to sleep when she felt its comforting warmth! How often, in after life, when she had many things to puzzle her and many, many burdens to bear, did she think of that kind old hand,—of how she clung to it in the darkness, feeling sure that her Heavenly Father's hand was just as ready to help her in her troubles and distresses!

CHAPTER IV

The sun shines bright in the old Kentucky home,
'Tis summer, the darkies are gay.
The corn-tops ripe, and the meadows in the bloom,
While the birds make music all the day.
The young folks roll on the little cabin floor,
All merry, all happy and bright,
Bimeby hard times comes a-knocking at the door,
Then my old Kentucky home good-night.

Stephen Foster.

THOUGH the schools were closed in Jackson, because of the threatening war-clouds, yet our little girls found no lack of things to do. Peachie, who had shown musical talent, kept up her music lessons, and had her regular hours for practice. Those were easy times for music pupils (in the South), when beginners did not have to spend a year or so on five-finger exercises and scales, but began taking "pieces" as soon as they knew their notes. Peachie's ambitious teacher had given her "Affection Waltz" at about her fourth lesson, and she electrified her admiring family shortly after by playing it through without a mistake. Now she had quite a repertoire of waltzes and polkas and schottisches, to say nothing of the songs the aspiring teacher gave her for variety. A long-cherished ambition had just been fulfilled when

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she had taken a piece in which she crossed her hands; and she never tired of practicing it.

And then she had recently discovered in her father's large library certain wonder books, commonly called novels, filled with brave warriors, devoted lovers, and beautiful maidens, and her world of dreams was all tinged with the hues of romance. Into this secret and sacred realm of a child's imagination, war as she had seen it, fitted like a part in some perfect pageant.

Then there was the daily task in sewing, for her mother was a notable housewife, and determined that her little daughters should be accomplished needlewomen. To this daily round had been recently added a lesson in knitting, in order that Peachie and Mary Sue might learn to knit socks for the dear soldiers; for the commissary department of the Southern armies was already sadly straitened, and the women felt they must do all they could to help clothe those who were fighting their country's battles.

Peachie had finished her morning practice hour, and ran out to refresh herself with a chat with Lilian and Manassas. The baby was sitting on the grass, happy as a king, eating a big sweet potato. Lilian's morning job was churning the day's supply of butter. Working the dasher up and down had such a soothing effect on her that she was apt to drop off to sleep while she was at her task. Her head was nodding as Peachie came down the steps, and Aunt Ginsy, who kept

a vigilant eye on her daughter from the kitchen door, had just sallied out, and was saying:

"Goin' to sleep, is yer!—an' butter jus' ready to come! I lay I'll keep your eyes open, you lazy, good-for-nothin' nigger you!"

She plucked two straws out of a broom, bent them, and dexterously fastened them to her daughter's drooping eyelids, so that the eyes could not be closed. Suddenly Lilian became very wide awake, and worked her dasher so vigorously that Peachie despaired of conversation with her at this unfortunate time. So, going back in the house, she got her knitting, called Mary Sue, and they went upstairs, to perform their morning's task in Captain Bedford's room. They were not yet proficient enough to undertake socks, and were learning the art on a washrag. Mary Sue was very nimble with her fingers, and was getting along famously, but Peachie made little progress.

"I've dropped another stitch," she sighed; "and my hands are all perspiring, and my needles are sticky,—and I'm just worn out."

"Give it to me, Peachie Battle," said Mary Sue in a superior manner, "and I'll straighten it out for you. Mamma said I could begin a pair of socks soon as I learned to do ribbing."

"What is ribbing?" asked Captain Bedford respectfully.

"It's knitting two stitches backward, and two forward," said Mary Sue, willing to improve an ignorant man. "But that's not the hardest part,

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—it's the heel and toe that scares me. And then you have to knit two socks to make a pair!"

"Knit your first sock for a one-legged man like me," said the Captain, half humorously, half sadly; "then you'll get through in one-half the time. I wonder if my little girl in Kentucky is learning to knit like you little Mississippi girls! But, look; there comes your Aunt Cary from her ride, with her everlasting Englishman, and Jim Estill, too, I do believe! I hope he's got a letter for me."

The children crowded to the window, to see Cary dash up on her spirited mare. She wore a green habit (made with the long skirt of those days), and looked very beautiful. She sprang from her saddle as lightly as a feather, and after bidding Mr. Jermyn good-bye, called out to Captain Bedford, as she and young Estill walked up to the front steps:

"Can we come up and see you, Captain? Jim has some Kentucky mail, and wants to share it with you."

The wounded soldier flushed and paled with mingled feelings of joy and anxiety,—one never knew what those fateful and far apart letters from distant loved ones might reveal! He mutely asked Cary's permission to read his letter, as the young soldier handed it to him, and plunged at once into the contents.

"I see by your face it's all right," said Cary kindly.

"Any news, Captain?"

"It is all right," he answered, with a sigh of relief. "My little Kate and her mother are well, thank God! Of course, they have the usual drawback in Kentucky of a surplus of Yankees, but my spirited wife can hold her own against their fool talk. She says one of 'em asked her the other day, what she thought of the report that Southern planters boiled little nigger babies, and made soap of 'em. She told him she thought it was a case of *concentrated lye*."

"Boil nigger babies!" said Peachie, indignantly. "Think of boiling Manassas! He's as cute and sweet as he can be."

"I wonder if they think we are barbarians?" exclaimed Cary. "What object could we have in mistreating anything as valuable as a slave (as they call them), to put it on its lowest plane! I never heard anybody call their negroes 'slaves' in my life."

"And all that talk about whipping negroes," said Captain Bedford, who was so happy at hearing from home that his tongue could not stop. "Why, when I was a boy, 'spare the rod and spoil the child' was a family and school motto. When I went to old Endicott's school at Lexington, he always whipped every boy once a day, and as many more times as he could find fault with us. I used to wish to be a man for nothing else than to get a gun and shoot old Endicott."

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"And did you?" asked Mary Sue with interest.

"Not exactly; by the time I was grown I concluded he was not worth it. Talking of shooting,—do you remember that Montgomery-Patton duel? Mr. Montgomery refused to be introduced to Mr. Patton, because he had heard that he did not treat his servants kindly. Mr. Patton challenged him, and they fought one of the famous duels of the South. A man who was unkind to his servants has always been considered beyond the pale. But don't let's talk about unpleasant things,—I'm so happy, I want to sing. Strike up 'My Old Kentucky Home,' Peachie."

All joined in the beautiful song, and the voices of the two Kentucky soldiers trembled a little on the chorus:

Weep no more, my ladies,
Oh, weep no more to-day!
I will sing one song for my old Kentucky home,
My old Kentucky home, far away.

"What's the news in camp, Jim?" asked the captain, the song finished.

"Scouts came in last night, and they say General Grant is moving on towards Raymond. We'll have fighting in a few days; it can't come too soon for me," said Jim Estill, who was a slim, boyish young fellow on General Breckinridge's staff,—the "staff baby," as they called him.

"You're too young to be such a fireeater,

Jim," said the captain, shaking his head at him. "How old are you anyhow, boy?"

"I'll be eighteen my next birthday," said Jim, flushing. "I'm a month older than Cousin Cary here."

"Yes; but your Cousin Cary's not going around, breathing threats and slaughter," said the captain, teasing him. "You were a kid of fifteen when you joined the army, weren't you, Jimmy?"

"Yes," the boy admitted. "I was afraid the war would be over if I didn't hurry up and join, and I wouldn't get a chance to do any fighting. But there are lots of boys in our brigade as young as I am."

"The more's the pity," said Captain Bedford, half sadly.

"The Southern Army has certainly robbed the cradle and the grave; it has no age limit at either end. But don't be reckless, son: we can't spare any of our brave fellows. Do you know what one of the staff said to me yesterday? 'Jim Estill hasn't got sense enough to know when to be afraid.'"

"I'm no worse than General Morgan, or General Breckinridge," retorted the boy, nettled. "Aren't they always in the thick of it, when fighting is going on? You wouldn't have me skulking in the rear, would you? But, Cap, the boys in the mess miss you awfully; General Breckenridge

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says no one can take your place on the staff; leg getting on all right?"

"I'm going to try crutches to-day; and I'd rather face a cannon than mount them; tell the general not to leave me behind, if we evacuate Jackson. By George, I'd rather die than run the risk of falling in the Yankees' hands and being sent to a Northern prison."

"You shan't be left, Cap, if I have to carry you off on my back," said the boy, looking at the poor wounded leg, with brimming eyes.

"Bless' my soul," said Cary, "if I hadn't forgotten Mrs. Yerger's invitation, with all this war talk! She wants you little girls to come to her house to a party this afternoon."

"Oh, goody!" said Mary Sue, rolling up her knitting. "Let's go and ask Mammy Viney what we shall wear, Peachie."

"And let's tell Lilian—I know she's through her churning now," said Peachie, joyfully sticking her washrag in her apron pocket.

Cary went with them, to change her riding habit, leaving the two soldiers alone to discuss the war news.

"I don't like to tell staff secrets before outsiders," said young Estill in a low voice, "but General Breckinridge told me to tell you that General Joe Johnston has been ordered to take command of the Army of Mississippi. He is at Tullahoma in Tennessee now, and is to start for Jackson immediately; this is May twelfth; if

the old slow trains don't break down, he ought to be here to-morrow."

"Praise the Lord!" said Captain Bedford fervently. "He can't get here too soon for me. I don't know what's the matter with Pemberton, with troops scattered all over the State. Why in thunder he doesn't concentrate his forces, I can't imagine."

"They say General Johnston is a sick man. I do hope he'll be able to take command in person when he gets here. They say that wound he got at Seven Pines is giving him no end of trouble."

"If we could only have had him a month ago!" said the captain, with an impatient sigh. "Then we might have stood up against Grant and Sherman; but things look pretty dark now. What is that I hear, Jim? Is it thunder?"

"No, Cap; sky is clear as a bell."

"By Jove, it's cannon! There's fighting going on somewhere! Let me see: General Gregg is at Raymond, and it's only twelve or fifteen miles off. Grant is attacking him, sure as you're born! Get on your horse, boy, and gallop back to headquarters. Don't say a word to anybody, —I'll tell Miss Cary you had to leave suddenly."

The young soldier ran lightly down the stairway, sprang on his horse, and was racing down the street in no time.

"I'll not say a word to Mrs. Battle until some more definite news comes," muttered the sick soldier. "General Gregg will hold Grant back

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awhile,—but he has only five thousand men. Grant is plainly headed for Jackson to get our supplies here, and the Jackson and Vicksburg railway,—but he can't march his army that distance all at once."

Unconscious of this background of battle and death raging so near, our little girls, in their dainty white dresses, went to Mrs. Yerger's to the party. They found a number of ladies standing around a table, on which were piled sheets and table cloths, and various white linen garments, which they were cutting into squares, each of the crowd of little girls being given a certain number of them, and shown how to ravel them into threads. When this was finished, the ladies collected the work, laying it in neat piles on the table. The children were told that this was *lint*, and that it was to be put on the wounds of soldiers shot in battle. The little girl who raveled the greatest number of squares was to be the queen of the party, and crowned with a beautiful wreath of roses, which was displayed on the sideboard.

The children were so much interested in their work that its dreadful significance hardly occurred to them. Mary Sue's nimble fingers outran all competitors, and after the work had been carried on for an hour or more, she was crowned as queen of the party,—and very proud and happy she was!

After all had partaken freely of Mrs. Yerger's

tea cakes and lemonade, Peachie sang, "Come, dearest, the daylight is gone," and played the piece where she crossed her hands, and then they all sang together "The Bonnie Blue Flag," with great enthusiasm.

How happy is childhood that it can walk on the brink of a dreadful precipice and see only the flowers that grow on the edge!

CHAPTER V

Just before the battle, mother,
I am thinking most of you,
While upon the field we're lying,
With the enemy in view.
Farewell, mother, you may never
Press me to your heart again;
But, oh, you'll not forget me, mother,
Though I'm numbered with the slain.

War Song.

THE next morning was May thirteenth, and everybody knew that a battle had been fought at Raymond, fifteen miles from Jackson; that General Gregg's little command had been defeated, and that it was but a question of a day or two before the Union Army would advance on the capital. General Grant's vigorous campaign, from the time he crossed the Mississippi (April thirtieth), to the investment of Vicksburg (May eighteenth), showed that there was a new Richmond in the field in the Federal forces. Instead of stopping at Grand Gulf long enough to establish a base of supplies, as most of his generals wanted him to do, he pressed on against the Confederates, with only rations of hard tack, coffee, and salt, relying on the country to supplement these slender supplies. This made his campaign of nearly twenty days,—from the time he en-

tered Mississippi to the beginning of the siege of Vicksburg,—an exceptionally bitter one for the country through which his army passed: it was literally stripped bare of everything that could be eaten by man or beast.

All of that fateful May day the people of Jackson were preparing for the hard time before them. Mrs. Battle and Mrs. Claiborne had a great deal of beautiful silver; it was all solid and of exquisite workmanship (in those days there was very little plated silver used). The small silver and jewelry were put in linen pillow-cases and sunk in the big cisterns, which everybody used for their water supply. The large silver pieces were buried in various places. All firearms (for every household had its quota of pistols or rifles in those troubled times) were put in some dry place, where they would not be ruined by rust; Mrs. Battle and her mother ripped their mattresses open and hid firearms and ammunition in them. Some of the staples from the storerooms and meat from their smoke-houses were also secreted.

All of this work was done by the servants, and no fear of their betraying the family treasures to the enemy ever entered the minds of their owners. The horses from both families were to be taken to a friend's place in the country,—off the route of the Union Army.

After dinner Mr. Claiborne and Tom rode up

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to Mrs. Battle's, Mr. Claiborne on Prince, and Tom with the carriage horses.

"I hate to see you go, Pa," said Mrs. Battle, "but I reckon it's best."

"Yes," returned her father, "they might take me prisoner in spite of my seventy years and my not being in the army; and I would rather die than go to a Northern prison."

"And you are young-looking for your age," said his daughter, gazing at him through a mist of tears. "I'm glad we've got no horses but Cary's mare and the carriage horses—Charlton has his riding horses in Vicksburg."

"Yes, and Ned has his, too," replied her father.

"I couldn't spare Uncle Abe to go with you," continued Mrs. Battle, "I need him here to help me. So I'm sending Uncle Brown and Pet along."

Uncle Brown,—the gardener,—and Pet came around the carriage drive just then, with the carriage horses and Cary's beautiful mare. All the family were gathered to see them off, and Aunt Ginsky wept audibly as she gazed on her son, sitting on Cary's embroidered saddle.

"Mind, you behave yourself, you limb er Satan," was her tender parting, "and don't give Ole Marse no trouble. If you does, you better not show your face here agin, or your pappy'll skin you alive."

"I wish I was going, too," said Blackie, strok-

ing the horses affectionately, "but I can't leave Mamma."

"I should say not," said Mrs. Battle, putting her arm around his shoulder. "You and Uncle Abe are the men of the family now."

"Pompey will have charge of things over at home," said Mr. Claiborne. "But some of you must be over with the old lady all the time."

"Cary or Blackie will stay with her at night, as well as one of the little girls," said Mrs. Battle, kissing him good-bye. "You'd better start, Pa; it's nearly ten miles to Mr. Boddie's, and it's past two o'clock now."

All left behind felt a pang of loneliness as they watched the little cavalcade cantering down the road. In every parting in those times there always lurked the possibility of tragedy—but the brave women of the South were not given to making moan over their heart-pangs. Mrs. Battle was as brave in governing her household as Colonel Battle was in commanding the artillery at Vicksburg.

"I believe we have done all we can now," she said. "Run in, little girlies, and let your Mammy Viney bathe and dress you. Cary, I wish you would go over and spend the afternoon with Ma; I know she feels lonely all by herself."

As Cary walked down by the Cape jessamine hedge, Blackie asked his mother:

"What did you do with the gold money? Did

you put it in the bag with the small silver, and sink it in the cistern?"

"No, I have it in a belt around my waist," she answered. "We don't know how long the silver will have to stay hidden, and we might need the money for something. Isn't that Jim Estill coming in the yard?" she asked abruptly.

"It is," said Blackie, who was very fond of the Kentucky boy, and felt quite as old as he was. "What's the news, Jim?"

"Good news, for a novelty! A dispatch has come from Meridian, saying that General Johnston has left there, and will be here on the evening train. It's due at four, but is hardly ever on time. Let's run up and tell the Captain."

"Thank the goodness!" was the Captain's comment. "If ever an army needed a man, the army of the Department of Mississippi needs Joe Johnston! Did he telegraph any orders?"

"Yes,—we're to get all movable supplies ready to ship on the railroad to Canton, in case we have to change our base. And the whole command is to start out early in the morning on the Raymond road, to meet Grant. We're in for some good fighting at last! You ought to see General Breckinridge,—he's as gay as a lark."

"The general loves a fight," said Captain Bedford.

"And he loves a commander over him that he can trust. Would to God, I could follow him

in a charge again! But my fighting days are over."

"The general thinks that as we may have to evacuate Jackson, and take Canton for our base of supplies, that you had better leave before there is any crowding and hurry. An ambulance will be here presently, and he wants you to start for Canton right off. He detailed me to be with you, and get you off comfortably."

"Bless him for thinking of a useless, broken down soldier at such a time as this," cried the Captain, much moved. "But that's the kind of man John C. Breckinridge is! You'll have to take me down the stairs on a stretcher, my boy. I've been trying to stump around the room on those crutches this morning, but I wouldn't dare use 'em on the steps; every jar to this old leg makes it feel as if lightning had struck it."

"Oh, the ambulance boys will bring a cot, and we'll get you down as smooth as silk! Don't you be uneasy, Cap."

"I'll pack up your things for you, Captain," said Mrs. Battle, already getting them out of the bureau drawers. "Run downstairs, Blackie, and tell Aunt Ginsy to fix a lunch for him,—he may not get a good supper at Canton. And go down in the cellar and get a bottle of that old port wine; it's fine for sickness."

"I'll never again strike such quarters and such friends as I have here," remarked the Captain, as Blackie flew down the steps, three at a time.

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"God bless you for all your goodness to a helpless, cross old soldier! And here's my blessed little girls! How can I get along without them?"

Peachie and Mary Sue ran into the room, exclaiming over the news of their dear Captain's going away.

Mrs. Battle, her packing finished, knelt down by the chair on which the poor, maimed leg was stretched, and looked over all the bandages carefully, to see that they were in place.

"Everything's all right, Captain," she said cheerfully. "It's healing finely. I don't believe it will hurt you a bit to be moved. We hate to see you go,—it's been a pleasure to have you in the house,—but we don't want you to fall into the hands of the Yankees. Speed the parting guest, you know."

"You don't want to put on your sword, do you, Captain?" asked Jim, taking it down from the mantelpiece.

"Not much," said the soldier with a grimace. "I want nothing dangling around this miserable stump of mine. Give it and the pistols to the ambulance driver. There he comes now!"

Two of the ambulance corps came upstairs, with tender hands placed the sick man on the stretcher, bore him down without a jar, and put him in the ambulance. All his belongings were stored beside him, and Mrs. Battle's practiced eye, seeing that he was much shaken by the or-

deal, shortened the farewell, and motioned the driver to go on.

As they watched the ambulance driving slowly away, Blackie said thoughtfully:

"Poor Captain! It's dreadful to be helpless, with the enemy so near. And to go through life a cripple! War's an awful thing,—ain't it, Mamma?"

Mrs. Battle put her arm about her boy, as if to shield him, but said nothing. Her thoughts were with the dear husband and father, who might be in a battle now any day.

The young soldier looked at the mother and son, with an unwonted shadow on his bright face, and said wistfully:

"I'd give everything I've got in the world to have my mother's arm around me as yours is around Blackie. I always miss her most just before a battle."

Mrs. Battle looked in his face, and said to Blackie:

"Run over to your grandmother's, son, and see if you can do anything for her."

She laid her hand on the young soldier's shoulder, and patted him gently.

"I know she would gladly lay down her life for you, dear boy," she said, tenderly.

"Just to kiss her good-bye again," he said, brokenly. "Oh, Mrs. Battle, I get so homesick for her sometimes."

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They were quite alone now, and Mrs. Battle's heart yearned over the lonely boy.

"Let me kiss you for your mother," she said, pressing her lips to his cheek. "Would to God that I could take every homesick boy in camp to my heart to-night and be mother to every one of them."

Tears ran unchecked down the boy's cheeks, and he pressed the kind hand that clasped him.

"If anything happens to me to-morrow," he whispered, "you will write to her,—will you not? Tell her I never knew how I loved her,—how good and dear she was,—till I left her."

"Oh, you'll come through all right!" said Mrs. Battle cheerfully. "You've been in a number of fights before, and never had a scratch."

"I never felt this way before," he said, wonderingly. "Good-bye—*Mother*—you've helped me a lot. God bless you and keep you through the troubled days to come."

He sprang on his horse and rode rapidly away. Mrs. Battle watched the gallant young figure till the shrubbery hid it from view, and then went slowly back in the house, with a heart full of foreboding.

CHAPTER VI

Brave boys are they
Gone at their country's call!
And yet—and yet, we must not forget,
That many brave boys must fall.

War Song.

GENERAL JOSEPH E. JOHNSTON reached Jackson that evening, and his very presence brought new life to the little army there. General Pemberton had marched out of Vicksburg with his garrison, and one of the first things that General Johnston did was to dispatch Captain Yerger to him, with orders to press on to Clinton, a few miles from Jackson, in hopes of uniting the two divisions before a decisive battle was fought. The army in the town had only about eleven thousand men, and that number was utterly unable to cope with Grant's greatly superior force.

Preparations were begun immediately for evacuation; the soldiers in the hospital and all movable stores were put on the cars to be carried to Canton, which General Johnston decided to make his next base of supplies. In order to cover this retreat, the little army broke camp early next morning, and marched out to meet Grant, who was now advancing on the town. The two ar-

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mies came together a few miles out, and the battle raged all the morning.

A night rain had fallen, and the chill, cloudy air seemed to breathe coming disaster. About noon the sun broke through the clouds, and an ideally beautiful May day shone on the anxious town. All preparations for the coming enemy had been made the day before, and the waiting women and children had nothing to do but sit and listen to the roar of cannon and shriek of shells that kept up all morning. Now and then they could even hear the sharp crack of the musketry. And their ears were ever strained for that other sound, often more dreadful than cannon roar, or bursting shell,—the feet of messengers from the field of battle, with news of doom or death of those they loved!

Mrs. Battle, Cary, Peachie, and Mary Sue were sitting on the front verandah, listening to the sinister thunder, while Blackie was over with his grandmother.

"Doesn't it sound nearer to you, sister?" asked Cary of Mrs. Battle, with white lips.

"We're on two of the main roads,—it might be right here! Cary, I believe I'll let you take the children and Mammy Viney, and go over to Pa's woods,—they run back quite a distance from the road. You would probably be out of range of the musketry there. And tell Ma to set Aunt Dilsey to cooking up everything she can for our

soldiers. They'll be hungry and worn out as they pass through."

"O sister, I can't leave you," cried the young girl; "you come, too."

"I can't leave the house—some one must stay here to watch it. Be a brave girl, and don't let the children think you are scared. Tell Blackie to go with you, too."

Mammy Viney fixed a basket lunch, in case they should stay out all day; and soon she and Cary and the children, including Lilian and Manassas, started off to the lovely woods, back of the deer park. Blackie joined them at Mrs. Claiborne's, as did some of her servants, and soon the whole party (but Cary) forgot the battle, raging so near, and enjoyed the pleasant open air, the greenwood (all fresh and glistening with the morning rain), and the bread and cakes and ham that Mammy Viney dispensed to them.

Mrs. Battle watched the refugees till they passed out of sight, and then went back to give directions to Uncle Abe and Aunt Ginsy about preparing provisions for the Southern soldiers.

"Get all the champagne and claret up out of the cellar, Uncle Abe," she said, "so it will be ready in case we can give it to our boys. And hide some of the old port behind the coal,—we might need it ourselves for sickness."

While the servants were busy preparing the food, Mrs. Battle went upstairs, to watch the road leading to the battle-field. The house,

which was the usual ample Southern mansion of two stories, had an observatory on top that commanded a wide view of the surrounding country.

Mrs. Battle took a pair of field glasses, and sat in the little room for several hours, listening to the sickening thunder, and straining her eyes for the sight of the returning soldiers. There were several roads leading into the town, and they stretched out like narrow ribbons, with no signs of life on them.

How often did the Southern women thus sit and watch and listen, during those fateful four years! The most cruel conflicts of the war were those waged in the hearts of quiet, unrepining women watching and waiting for tidings of their dear ones, and of their country's battles!

Presently the dull booming of the cannon grew more intermittent, and soon along the Raymond road, Mrs. Battle could see through her glasses, a black line which seemed to be coming toward her. It rapidly grew more distinct,—she could see banners,—then through her glasses she recognized the Confederate flag.

"They are our troops," she murmured. "They are retreating; but it is not a rout,—the firing and cannonading have almost stopped. General Johnston will certainly evacuate Jackson, and try and join Pemberton. That means the enemy will be here before night. I must run down and superintend the giving out of food to our soldiers when they pass."

She flew down the steep observatory stairs, then on down the broad stairway, and out to the kitchen. There the tables were filled with great pans of bread and meat that Aunt Ginsy and the maids had prepared; on the porch were baskets filled with the wine that Uncle Abe had brought up from the cellar.

"I believe we had better send over to the woods for Cary and the children and Mammy Viney,—don't you think so, Uncle Abe? Our troops are marching back to town and the enemy don't seem to be pursuing them. I don't believe we shall have a fight here."

"We'll need every one of 'em to help pack these-here biscuits an' ham and bacon down to the fence," said Aunt Ginsy, answering (as she often did) for her husband. "You, Peggy, you run over to Ole Miss' woods, an' tell 'em to light out an' hurry home."

Peggy raced across the yard, and into the Claiborne grounds, returning soon with the little party,—just as the first of an advancing column of Southern soldiers appeared on the road.

In answer to Cary's question, the officer in front of the men replied:

"The fight went against us,—we have to retreat. We are going to evacuate Jackson!"

An army in retreat! What more tragic sight in the world! How different was this to Cary from the gay soldiers in holiday dress that she had so often watched! A haggard anger, a stern

resentment seemed to breathe from their ranks!

Soon all the household were running back and forth from the house to the road, carrying the food and wine to the weary, hungry soldiers. It seemed a great quantity as they bore it across the yard, but it disappeared like magic before them. Mrs. Battle stood at the fence, directing the distribution, and presently, as the Kentucky troops were marching by, she saw an officer whom she knew, who reined up his horse to speak to her.

"We are retreating in good order," he said, "and if Pemberton has only obeyed orders, and is anywhere near Clinton, we can join him before the enemy attacks us separately, and have good hope of victory. But with our forces divided up as they are now, we stand no chance against Grant."

"Were our losses heavy?" asked Mrs. Battle, with a sinking heart. "Any of our friends——"

"Poor Jim Estill was killed," the officer replied gently. "The brave boy was in the front of the first charge; he fell early in the battle. We couldn't bring our dead away, or stop to bury them,—the enemy will do that."

"Poor boy,—God bless him!" murmured the woman with streaming eyes. "He felt the shadow of death on him yesterday."

All the food that had been prepared having given out now, Mrs. Battle went back to the front verandah, where Cary and the children were seated, and told them of the boy's death. Blackie

was especially affected, and wept uncontrollably.

"Do not grieve so, my son," said his mother. "He died for his country; he is one of its heroes. Greater love hath no man than this,—that a man lay down his life for his country. But his poor mother!" And her voice broke.

"Did you know her, Mamma?" said Peachie, creeping close to her side.

"She was a distant relation of your father's, but I never saw her. Cary met her, and visited her home when at school in Kentucky."

By three o'clock in the afternoon, all of General Johnston's little army had passed out of Jackson, and soon after, the Union Army began to enter.

When the last of the Confederates had disappeared down the road, Mrs. Battle sent Blackie over to stay with his grandmother. In the rush and hurry of the day, there had been no thought of dinner, and Aunt Ginsy brought a little lunch out to them where they sat. It was a perfect May afternoon, and the morning shower had left a beautiful freshness on everything. The cape jessamines were at their loveliest, the roses were in full bloom, and the crêpe myrtles were like great domes of solid pink blossoms. Mrs. Battle thought she had never seen her home look so sweet and peaceful. The stillness and quiet seemed wonderful, after the rush of the passing army, now out of sight. Mammy Viney and Peggy had moved all signs of the family's hasty

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meal, and they sat quietly, listening to a mocking bird in the big magnolia tree.

Suddenly they heard the ring of horses' feet on the road, and two cavalrymen, in the Union blue, dashed through the gate and around the carriage drive, and dismounting, strode heavily up on the verandah. Peachie's little pet dog, which was lying in her lap, began to bark, and one of the men, with an oath, drew his pistol and aimed at him,—but Mrs. Battle said with unconscious satire:

“Don't shoot! He is too small to hurt you.”

Just then Mammy Viney called out from Mrs. Battle's bedroom:

“Good Lord, Miss Sally, come here!”

Entering the room, Mrs. Battle and her companions found two more soldiers, one of them kneeling before the bureau with the drawers pulled out, and saying something about “searching for firearms,” as he hastily thrust a package into his pocket. The two men had slipped in a side gate and through an open window before any one noticed them. The stolen package was some plated forks and spoons, bought for use in emergencies like this.

Uncle Abe now called out from the yard, that there were soldiers in the smoke-house, and a group could be seen chasing chickens in the poultry yard. Indeed, the whole place seemed alive with bluecoats, ostensibly searching for firearms, but really after plunder.

A dozen or more shots sounding from the direction of Mrs. Claiborne's made Mrs. Battle very uneasy about her mother, so she sent Uncle Abe over to see how her parent and Blackie were getting on. In fifteen or twenty minutes the old servant returned in a high state of indignation.

"What was the shooting about?" asked Mrs. Battle anxiously.

"Killin' Ole Miss' poor innocent deer. There was a whole lot er soldiers in the park, crackin' away at the ole stag, an' Brer Pompey was jess beggin' 'em to spare the little fawns an' the mother; but they jess laughed at him, an' tole him to shet his black mouth. I tell you, Brer Pompey was jess a-bilin'; for he loves them deer better'n his own chillen."

"O Uncle Abe, did they kill the sweet little fawns?" cried Peachie and Mary Sue, weeping.

"They did for shore, honey. They's poor folks,—soldiers; I lay they don' know what a deer park is. I speck they thought it was deer out in de woods."

"How was Ma, Uncle Abe?" asked Mrs. Battle. "Was she scared?"

"Ole Miss skeered! Lord, no, Miss Sally! She was madder'n a wet hen. Some other soldiers was chasin' an' ketchin' her chickens, an' she was standin' on the back porch, 'busin' 'em, an' callin' 'em 'thievin' Yankees.'"

"Oh, she ought not to do that," cried Mrs.

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Battle anxiously. "She'll make them mad, and they might hurt her."

"Laws, Miss Sally, they wan't mad! They was jess laughin' an' jokin' an' mockin' her; they was too glad to be gettin' all that deer and chicken food."

"I hope Blackie didn't say anything to them," said his mother. "They might hurt a boy."

"Dat blessed boy never spoke one word: he jess stood by his grandma, with his arm roun' her waist, and looked as black as thunder at them rascals. He sholy did look like his pa."

The whole afternoon was a blur of bluecoats, —prying, plundering everywhere: the smoke-houses, the storerooms, the wine-cellar, the poultry-yard, the garden, were stripped bare of all their contents. No food was left for the family, except what they had hidden. Then all the Battles thought joyfully of the bread and meat and wine they had given their own dear soldiers.

Mrs. Battle had noted the glances of admiration that some of the soldiers cast on Cary, so she sent her and the children, with Mammy Viney, to an upstairs room, and told them to lock the door. As darkness came on, the plunderers went to their camp, carrying their spoils with them; they had not found any of the buried and hidden treasures nor firearms.

"Praise de Lawd, Miss Sally!" said Uncle Abe, who had kept close to his mistress all the time. "I never seed white folks steal dat-a way be-

fore; they sholy mus' belong to the poor white trash."

That night Mrs. Battle had the servants make down pallets, and sleep on the first floor of the house, then she went upstairs, where Mammy Viney had already put the little girls to bed. They were sleeping soundly, after the turmoil and excitement of the day. When she had kissed them softly, she and Cary went to a window in another room that overlooked the town. An angry red glare hung over the place, and it seemed to them that it was all on fire. They knew afterward that it was only the public buildings that were burned, but their hearts ached for the beloved city. Then a sharper pang smote them, as they thought of the dear dead boy lying on his field of battle all through the long, lonely night.

"O sister," said Cary, clinging to her, "it breaks my heart to think of him,—so young, so brave, so gay!"

"He had a premonition," said Mrs. Battle.

And she told of her parting with young Estill.

Musing awhile with sombre eyes, she went on at length:

"Something must be done! I promised him to write to his mother; I cannot tell her that I had let her boy, her only son, be buried in the trenches,—his grave unknown, unmarked."

"But what could we do, sister?" asked the young girl, looking wonderingly at the set, stern face above her.

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"Never mind now. We'll sleep over it. Lie down, dear, and get some rest."

Cary threw herself on the bed, without taking off her clothes, and sobbed herself to sleep. But Mrs. Battle took a pair of pistols out of a mattress, loaded them, and sat far into the night, watching the burning town and listening to every sound. Once she heard some one moving cautiously around the house, and called out sharply, "Who's there?"

"Tain' no pusson but me, Miss Sally," answered Uncle Abe's voice. "I was jess a paterrollin' roun' de house, to see if any of them poor white Yankees was prowlin' roun'. Lawd knows, they ain't nothin' to prowl after, 'cause they's jess actully stript everything bare."

"Go to bed, Uncle Abe,—you'll wear yourself out."

"I won't go lessen you goes too, Miss Sally," said the obstinate old darky.

"It's a bargain then. Good-night, Uncle Abe."

She had formed her plan for the morrow, so, everything being perfectly still, she lay down in her clothes, and soon fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

CHAPTER VII

Young as the Youngest who donned the Gray,
True as the truest that wore it,
Brave as the bravest, he marched away
(Hot tears on the cheek of his mother lay)
Proudly waved our flag one day!—
He fell in the front before it.

On the trampled breast of the battle plain
Where the foremost ranks had wrestled,
On his pale, pure face not a mark of pain,
(His mother dreams they will meet again).
The fairest form amid all the slain,
Like a child asleep he nestled.

Father Ryan.

THE next morning Mrs. Battle, taking Uncle Abe with her, left home early, without telling any one where she was going. She was bound for General Grant's headquarters, and had very little difficulty in finding the place.

Mrs. Battle was still a young woman,—only thirty-five years old,—but the anxious months since Colonel Battle had been in Vicksburg had left marks on her still beautiful face. She was of queenly and commanding presence, and the crowd of men that were waiting for audience with the great general unconsciously gave way to her. The *aide-de-camp* who was standing at the door asked her errand, and she gave him her card,

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upon which she had also written her husband's name. He took it in, came back presently, and said courteously:

"The General is very busy, but he will see you for a few moments."

He led her to a room where a tired-looking, unshaven, bearded man was sitting at a table, dictating to another officer whose pen was racing over the paper. It was General Grant.

Bowing to Mrs. Battle, the General motioned her to a chair, and concluded his despatch. When the secretary had left the room Grant took up her card and said:

"I see you are the wife of Colonel Battle in Vicksburg. He is one of the bravest of our foes. General Sherman learned something of his guns at the battle of Chickasaw Bayou last winter. What can I do for you?"

As briefly as she could Mrs. Battle told him of her desire to go to yesterday's battle-field and get the body of young Estill, of General Breckinridge's Staff, in order to bring it to her house for burial in her lot in the town cemetery.

"He is the only son of his mother, and she is a widow, in far-off Kentucky. I have been told that you have your young son with you in this campaign, General. You will know how to feel for her. All I ask is a pass to go through the lines and come back again as soon as I have found him."

"Have you an ambulance and some men to help you?"

"There are no men left in either my family or my friend's, except our negro servants. I have my coachman with me. We shall get a horse and wagon, if there are any left in Jackson."

General Grant looked kindly at the proud, lovely face.

"It is a hard task you have assumed," he commented. "I honor you for it. The mothers of the South are as brave as the men."

He wrote a line, walked with her to the door, and handed it to an officer, saying to Mrs. Battle:

"Major Compton will furnish you all you need. I wish you success in your errand."

The waiting crowd made way respectfully for the lady whom the stern and silent general had treated with such distinction as to accompany to the door.

Major Compton, having led her and Uncle Abe to where there was a line of ambulances, said:

"The General ordered an ambulance and driver put at your disposal, with an extra man, if you wish."

"I think the driver and my servant and myself will be all needed," answered Mrs. Battle. "I am looking for the body of a young Kentuckian

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who was killed yesterday; when we find him we shall fill the ambulance."

"If you will permit me," said the Major kindly, "I will ride over with you. I am off duty this morning and I might help you to locate the place where he is; I remember that charge of General Breckinridge's brigade."

She thankfully accepted his offer, and they started off immediately,—Mrs. Battle on the seat with the driver, Uncle Abe in the back of the ambulance, while Major Compton rode on horseback beside them.

When the driver was told their errand, he remarked:

"We'd better get a move on ourselves, then; the burial squad started out there more than an hour ago."

"Oh, do hurry!" cried Mrs. Battle with a sinking heart. She feared there would be little hope of ever finding young Estill's remains if once buried in the trenches.

When they reached the field of battle Major Compton made them stop a little distance off, while he rode forward to reconnoiter. Mrs. Battle could see squads of men digging, and her heart quailed as she thought of the brave fellows from both North and South who would soon be buried there, and of the aching, breaking hearts that would mourn them. Presently the Major rode back and said in a low voice:

"I have found the place,—but it is a dreadful

sight for you! Would your servant know him? Had you better not stay here while we go and try to find him?"

"It is most thoughtful of you to want to spare me, but there were so many soldiers coming and going at my house that Uncle Abe might not know him. He is a coachman, not a house servant who saw the guests frequently."

They drove on to the edge of the field, and stopped while they dismounted and walked a few steps. Then Mrs. Battle saw!—oh, the horror of it!—gallant figures, mutilated, bloody, in blue and in gray, lying stiff and stark! A horror and a shuddering seized her, and she clung for a moment to the kind officer's arm.

"It is too much for you," he said, anxiously. "Don't try it."

"I must," she replied, all white and trembling. "I shall soon be myself. But, oh, how terrible,—how wicked is war!"

In a little while she had gained command of herself, and went from one prostrate, pathetic figure to another, looking for the face she longed yet dreaded to find.

At length she gave a stifled cry:

"Here he is!"

And she sank to her knees by a boyish figure lying easily on his side, his handsome young face as sweet and untroubled as the May morning sky.

They lifted him tenderly to the ambulance, and

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as they drove slowly away she could see the burial squads, pausing in their digging, lay the dead in rows, and gently compose their poor mangled bodies in decent shape for their last, long sleep. Her heart bled for them: no loving hand,—no rain of tears to anoint them for their burial!

The children and Cary wept bitterly as Major Compton and Uncle Ned brought the Kentucky boy in the house, where they had so often heard his gay chatter. As Mrs. Battle thanked the Northern soldier for his helpfulness, and remembered the great general's kindness, the bitterness she had felt toward the enemies of her country melted away, and she realized that there were noble and feeling hearts that beat beneath the blue as well as beneath the gray.

Mrs. Battle and Cary with their own hands prepared their young warrior's body for burial. That evening, he was borne to the Battle lot in the cemetery by the negro men of both places, and good old Mr. Petrie, the one minister who had remained in Jackson, uttered over him those words of eternal hope that are the only stay of our hearts when a beloved one passes out of our sight into the Great Unknown. And so, with tears and prayers and flowers, they left the soldier boy to his last sleep.

During the remaining day and night that General Grant's army stayed in Jackson, Mrs. Battle's and Mrs. Claiborne's homes suffered no more such depredations as on the first afternoon.

Whether the discipline was stricter than on their first entrance into the town or the word had gone forth that there was nothing left for other foragers, or Major Compton had given orders for their protection, none knew. The Union major had evidently been much impressed by Mrs. Battle's high-hearted courage,—possibly also by Cary's exquisite beauty,—for he came twice during the day to offer his services; but there was no other favor that they felt able to receive at the hands of a stranger.

But the real protectors of the two households during the two days that the Union army occupied Jackson were Uncle Abe and Uncle Pompey. And what was true of the Battles and the Claibornes was true of unprotected families all over the South,—women and children in lonely country homes, miles away from their nearest neighbors, as well as in towns, found their faithful servants their best friends and advisers.

Is it not a sufficient answer to stories of cruelty,—told so frequently in the North in those days,—that during the four years of war, when all the men, even the boys of the South, were in the army and the women and children were left in the hands of the negroes, that not a single instance of misuse of their power is on record? Rather are innumerable instances told of their fidelity and devotion to their helpless charges! Surely this shows that, on the whole, the relations between master and servant were mutually kind

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and affectionate,—especially when one remembers the outrages that have been committed since those ties were broken! This noble fidelity during those troubled times argues worth on both sides,—kindness on the part of the master, loyalty on that of the servant.

The Northern army evacuated Jackson on May sixteenth, and the people breathed a sigh of relief as the last of the soldiers marched away. Many of the public buildings had been burned, and the homes stripped of all available provisions and valuables; but the people did not concern themselves so much about that: those were the fortunes of war. They were happy because they were no longer within the enemies' lines and could now hear news of what was happening to our own soldiers in Mississippi,—wherever, indeed, fighting was going on. In those days news from the front was the one essential thing the non-combatants craved; almost every family had some one fighting the battles of his country somewhere. Now that the scene of conflict was so near, it was intolerable not to know what was going on.

It was known that General Pemberton had left Vicksburg, and was advancing to meet the enemy; that General Joseph E. Johnston had sent him orders to press on toward Jackson, in hopes of uniting the two divisions. "Had the two armies succeeded in coming together?" That was the question in every heart. All realized that that

was the only hope of making a successful stand against the greatly superior forces of Grant and Sherman.

Rumors were soon flying over the town,—rumors that gradually crystallized into a few ominous facts.

Pemberton had not pressed on to a junction with Johnston; a bloody battle had been fought at Champion Hill, Pemberton had been defeated and was retreating to Vicksburg, and General Loring's brigade, which was on the right of his line, had been cut off and was now trying to effect a junction with General Johnston.

Mr. Claiborne brought this disastrous news when he returned home that night with the horses, the negro men and Pet. It was like a knife in Mrs. Battle's heart,—not only because it meant a crushing blow to the South but because Colonel Battle's regiment of light artillery was in the fight, and no word had come from him. Company A in his regiment was made up of young men of Jackson, and almost every household in the town was in sickening suspense as to the fate of some loved one. Mrs. Battle could not go to bed, and about midnight a messenger rode up to the door with a line from her husband, scribbled on his knee:

Ned and I are safe—retreating to Vicksburg—probably make another stand at Big Black Bridge.

The next night came the news of the battle of Big Black River, of the burning of the bridge,

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of the second defeat of Pemberton, and his final return to Vicksburg, which, of course, destroyed any lingering hope of a junction of his army with that of General Johnston.

On the eighteenth day of May General Grant formally invested Vicksburg, and the siege of the doomed town began.

Mrs. Battle kept a brave face in those days of terror and suspense. She knew that her husband would always be where the fight was thickest, and any hour might bring her news of his death,—yet her household never saw her yield to either tears or complaint.

General Loring called on her when General Johnston's army came back to Jackson, and brought her word of the battle of Champion Hill, where his command had been cut off from Pemberton's forces. General Loring had lost an arm in the Mexican War, was rather stout, bald-headed, with choleric black eyes, and had a fashion of slipping out an oath every now and then.

"Colonel Battle's artillery was posted on the left wing of our line of battle," he told her, "and his guns were doing splendid work. I was by him when he received a message from General Stephen D. Lee which said, 'As long as you hold your position, I feel safe.'"

"I know he held it," said Mrs. Battle proudly.

"He did, by ——!" replied General Loring. "I was ordered to another part of the field, and in a desperate charge of the Federals was cut off

from Pemberton, but scouts told us that Colonel Battle held on grimly, until the order to retreat was sounded. You'll have to excuse a soldier dropping an oath now and then, dear lady."

Mr. Claiborne, who had brought the General to his daughter's to call, said, smiling:

"You'll have to do like my Uncle Patrick, General. He lived in the early days of the State, when men indulged more in 'cuss words' than they do now. He was a leading Methodist as well as a politician, and when he would fall from grace by saying an oath he would be sorely distressed. Finally, he invented a word which relieved his feelings when excited, yet was not profane,—that word was *dangnation*. He found it so useful,—and used it so freely,—that they used to call him 'Dangnation Claiborne.'"

"Can't you invent an innocent expletive for me, Miss Cary?" asked the General, looking at the young girl admiringly. He was a bachelor, and very susceptible to youth and beauty. "A poor commander of a brigade in these trying times needs some outlet to his feelings."

Cary started and blushed,—her thoughts were far away, dwelling on Ned Chichester, who had been in those two dreadful battles and was now shut up in the beleaguered city. The death of her young cousin, and the terrible experiences of the past few days had softened and sobered her undisciplined, pleasure-loving nature; she was undergoing one of the swift changes of those trying

times, when boys became men and girls women in a few short months.

"General Loring tells me, Sally," said Mr. Claiborne to his daughter, "that the battle of Big Black was fought on our plantation. The house has been burnt down and everything eatable and valuable has been seized by the Yankees. My poor darkies, what will become of them?"

"What will become of us?" said Mrs. Claiborne, leaning her head on his shoulder and weeping bitterly. "Robbed of all we have in our old age!"

"Con-fistocate Grant and Sherman, and the whole crew of 'em!" said the irascible General, rising to go. "Whenever I can do anything for you, Mrs. Battle, command me. The whole brigade will be glad to serve Colonel Battle's family."

CHAPTER VIII

We shall meet; but we shall miss him,
There will be one vacant chair;
We shall linger to caress him,
As we breathe our evening prayer.

War Song.

DURING the month that followed, life seemed to slip back into its old groove. General Loring's appreciation of his new friends seemed to grow, and he soon became one of the admiring group that clustered around the beauty of Jackson during those lovely June nights. Somehow, war and love-making always seem to be inextricably linked. This was a time of quick friendships, and quick giving and receiving of love troths. The dear land,—the dear cause, with disaster gathering so thick and fast about it,—struck a common chord that drew all hearts close together.

And love and friendship seemed to find their inevitable expression in song and music. In those days serenades frequently sounded in the "stilly night"; admirers loved to steal forth by moonlight, or starlight, and sing under their true love's windows. Those war songs may not have ranked high as musical compositions, but few mel-

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odies have ever so tugged at the heart as "The Bonnie Blue Flag," "Maryland," "The Vacant Chair," "When This Cruel War Is Over," and the many, many, Mother Songs in which the homesick hearts of our boys found expression.

Mrs. Battle never discouraged these nightly gatherings of handsome officers and pretty young girls on the broad front verandah but she never tarried long with them. After her day's round was over she would generally sit on one of the side porches, and strain her ears for another sound than the tinkle of guitar or violin, and the music of singing. Vicksburg was only forty-five miles from Jackson, and during the six weeks of siege, Admiral Porter's fleet (in front of the city) and General Grant's army (in the rear) were dropping shot and shells in it both night and day. In quiet evenings, there would be plainly heard a dull and distant booming like far off thunder,—the never-silent guns of Vicksburg!

Colonel Battle commanded the artillery there, and the wife knew that he was sure to be wherever the firing was heaviest. When alone, she would sit with clenched hands and blanched cheeks, listening to the sinister sound, which struck her heart as deadly a blow as it did those who fell before the dreadful storm.

How much of this watching and waiting and listening was done by the women of the South!

The little girls would be generally either at their grandmother's, or hearing the gay talk and

song on the front portico; but Blackie would slip away from the crowd when he missed his mother, and open his boyish heart to her, or sit quietly by her, holding her hand in his.

And now, against this dark background of the boom of the Vicksburg guns, there came the echo of the footsteps of the messenger of evil tidings, —the most ominous sound of all!

Peachie was over at her grandmother's one morning, when a haggard man galloped in and asked:

"Does Mrs. Claiborne live here?"

Then, handing the child a note, he rode clattering down the street. Her grandmother came running out, with two or three of the servants, seized the message, and, as she read it, gave an exceeding great and bitter cry. The note said that in one of the assaults by the Union army on the town, Ned Chichester had fallen at the close of battle. The Union forces were successful, and gained ground nearer the city, while the Confederate dead and wounded were left in their lines. Lieutenant Chichester's name was not among the wounded who were captured, and there could be no doubt that he had been killed and buried with the Federal dead.

This blow aged Mr. Claiborne more than all his previous calamities.

"They are robbing me of all that made life worth while," he groaned. "Would that I could take up a gun and fight those people!"

"O Pa, don't think of that!" said Mrs. Battle, clinging to him. "You have Ma and the children and me left."

He pressed his daughter to his heart, and held out his arms to the weeping, wondering children, now first gazing into the tragic depths of life.

Mrs. Battle glanced from one to another of the group; Mrs. Claiborne sobbing on Blackie's shoulder, the little girls comforting their grandfather, the wailing servants,—and saw no sign of Cary.

Slipping out of her father's arms, she ran quickly over to her own house, looking through the shrubbery in her race. She at length hastened up to Cary's room, and found the young girl stretched across her bed, her whole body shaken with dry, tearless sobs.

"My poor child!" she murmured, lying down beside the girl and clasping her in her arms. "He died for his country; he was a hero!"

"I know it. I am such a wretch," sobbed the young girl. "He loved me,—and I trifled with him! Sister, can you ever forgive a wicked flirt like me?"

Mrs. Battle was a woman of such unbending integrity and sincerity that she was sometimes accused of lack of sympathy with weakness; unconsciously her arms loosened from the trembling, quivering form, but Cary clung to her the closer and cried:

"Don't cast me off! I did not mean to hurt him."

"To trifle with a good man's love,—it is as cruel as death! Why could you not tell him you did not love him, instead of giving him false hopes!"

"But I did love him,—I have never loved any one else; and I let him go away that day at the plantation, without letting him know. He said, if he were sure that he had my heart he could go into battle happy."

"And you could let him go without telling him!" said the other woman, marveling.

"We were so young! I thought there was plenty of time," said the young girl, falling into bitter but blessed tears.

Mrs. Battle took Cary again in her arms, and breathed:

"My poor child,—God help you!"

"I know I have been vain and heartless. O, sister, can you ever forgive me? Will Uncle Claiborne ever care for me again?"

Mr. Claiborne was far from blaming Cary, for in his gentle, generous heart there was a well-spring of sympathy and tolerance for youth and its mistakes. Cary's remorseful love for the young soldier drew them more closely together, and during those tragic closing weeks, when Vicksburg was passing through the throes of want and death and defeat, the old man and the young girl passed much time together. Every day they

would walk in the ruined deer-park, or through the still beautiful grounds and shrubberies, and he would tell her of Ned's happy, gallant youth, and of all the hopes that were bound up in him; and the young girl found it easier to open her heart to this sweet spirited old man, than to Mrs. Battle, or Mrs. Claiborne. The old man found comfort in trying to heal the bruised young heart first awakening to the deeps and sorrows of life, and helped to guide her through the transition period from vain and careless girlhood to true and noble womanhood.

And he taught her the greatest of all the secrets of life. He had walked with God through all his three-score-and-ten years, and from him, as well as from the cravings of her own stricken heart, she first learned the reality of the Christian life, and the meaning of the presence of God. She had been a member of the church since her childhood, but it took the touch of sorrow, and the wise counsel of this seer of divine things, to reveal to her the verities of the religion in which she had been born and reared. In after life Cary often looked back to those quiet June days,—when she walked and talked with this old saint of God,—as among the most blessed of her life.

Cary's lovers and admirers soon felt the change in her, but took it with soldierly philosophy,—it was part of the fortunes of war, they reasoned. But the fair young English war correspondent, Harry Jermyn, was too deeply smitten for the

exercise of philosophy; and in spite of Cary's efforts to spare him, he forced her to give him the pain of refusing his love. So he, too, passed out of her life.

Thus, the month of June passed heavily and slowly by. They were days and nights of heart-breaking suspense. At rare intervals a worn and spent messenger,—who had taken his life in his hands when he slipped through the enemies' line to bring despatches from General Pemberton to General Johnston,—would creep into the town. He would hardly reach headquarters before the word would fly everywhere, and a crowd would gather to hear the news, and listen in sickening anxiety for the list of dead and wounded. Mrs. Battle made no moan, but in her raven hair there appeared streaks of gray,—marks of the travail of her soul. The picture of the beleaguered town was ever before her,—with gunboats in front, and a great army surrounding it in the rear, thundering shot and shell day and night; with the people hiding in caves dug in the hill-sides, and weary soldiers, always at their posts; with hunger and disease working as cruel havoc as the enemies' guns, and with ever the terrible thought, "Is my husband still among the living?"

About the end of June General Johnston's little army again left Jackson, in the vain hope of doing something to relieve the besieged city. It

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seemed as if Vicksburg were a dreadful magnet that drew everything to it.

July opened, hot and breathless. On the morning of the fifth of the month, the news was on every tongue, without any one knowing whence it came:

"Vicksburg surrendered on the fourth of July!"

Mr. Claiborne galloped up on Prince, bearing the dread tidings. Mrs. Battle's lips barely breathed:

"And Charlton,—is he safe?"

"He's all right," said her father. "He will be paroled; he will soon be with us. But our cause,—I am afraid the fall of Vicksburg is its death-blow."

The wife was swallowed up in the patriot, and Mrs. Battle cried passionately:

"The Mississippi River from source to mouth in the hands of the enemy! And the shame of surrendering on the fourth of July! I can never forgive General Pemberton for that!"

After the fall of Vicksburg General Johnston's army again fell back on Jackson,—this time with the stern purpose of making a determined stand there.

As the Battle and Claiborne houses occupied high ground just outside Jackson,—on the main road to Vicksburg,—the orchard between the two places was selected as the best location for a fort, and trenches were dug all around the

yards. During the week that elapsed between the surrender and the time when part of the Union army, under General Sherman, invested Jackson, Mrs. Battle and her father saw their homes laid waste; but not a murmur was on their lips or a grudging thought in their hearts, because it was for the cause so dear to them.

All day long squads of soldiers were digging the trenches and throwing up the breastworks, where they were to make a stand against the enemy. On the highest point in the orchard a fort was gradually raised, and cannon mounted on its walls, to sweep the road along which the Northern army would come. Teams were driven up and down the grounds, and the lovely cape jessamine hedge and the beautiful shrubberies were laid low. General Loring, at Mrs. Battle's invitation, made her house his headquarters, and all day long, officers were galloping back and forth on their errands.

Mr. Claiborne, instead of sinking under these accumulated misfortunes, seemed to recover the vigor that once characterized his green old age. He volunteered his services to General Loring, and was made a member of his staff. He was one of the finest horsemen of his day, his saddle-horse, Prince, was without a peer and in first-class condition, and his perfect knowledge of both town and country made him an invaluable aide.

General Loring, whose admiration of Mrs. Battle grew as he knew her better, paid her the

tribute of talking to her with perfect frankness of their condition.

"You know, dear lady," he explained, "fighting is my profession,—I fought through the Mexican War as well as this, and have done frontier service in the West,—and a battle is the very breath of my nostrils. I am heartily in favor of making a stand here in Jackson,—and yet, I don't believe we have the ghost of a chance to hold it permanently. Sherman, who is on his way here now, outnumbers us two to one. Even if we could hold out against him, Grant can send him reinforcements just as soon as all the terms of surrender are carried out and the thirty thousand prisoners in Vicksburg are disposed of."

"All Mississippi then will soon be in the enemies' lines?" asked Mrs. Battle, turning paler.

"Undoubtedly, dear lady. If you don't want to spend the rest of this — war (excuse a poor sinning soldier) in the Yankee lines, cut off from all communication with our people, you'll have to take to the road,—in plain words, join the army of homeless refugees."

The two were walking back and forth on the pavement in front of the house, and Mrs. Battle, looking up at the beautiful, stately home where her happy married life had been spent, asked:

"This house,—and Pa's house too,—will be ruined by shot, if not burned down by shells, I suppose?"

"The brunt of the battle will be fought right here. Both houses are doomed," said the kind General, torn with pity for her. "The best thing you and Mrs. Claiborne can do, is to move everything possible to a safer place, and arrange to move out yourselves in the next three or four days. While you both have a good force of servants, yet I will detail a squad of trusty men to help you, and put two or three wagons at your disposal, to move things."

Mrs. Battle was silent a moment; then and there she was undergoing the pang of parting with the old easy, happy life. At last she raised her eyes,—and they were quite dry and bright,—and said:

"I shall join the noble army of refugees rather than be shut up within the enemies' lines. When I leave this house, it will be forever. How can I get away, though?"

"The only feasible route is for you to go over the railroad north to Meridian. You can wait somewhere on the road for the Colonel, till he gets his parole papers and those of his men arranged and can join you and take you to some other place than this forsaken old State of Mississippi. I think I can arrange to have a freight car given you to travel in and store such things as you must have."

"And the things I cannot take with us," she said thoughtfully, "I will send out to the Lunatic Asylum. It is not far from here, the Superinten-

dent is a friend and relation, and will do all he can for us; and places like that are generally free from depredation."

"That is a first-class plan," the General agreed heartily. "I will send some soldiers up, and you can begin work right away."

CHAPTER IX

As you went down the road, dear,
As you went down the road,
How chill the breeze began to blow!—
My heart took up its load;
The skies that had been blue and bright,
How fast they darkened into night!

Danske Dandridge.

THAT very day, the business of dismantling the two homes began. The beautiful paintings, in which Colonel Battle took such pride, were knocked out of their frames, so as to occupy less space; books were packed in boxes; china, of which the two families had a rare collection, was stored in barrels; carpets, and some of the handsomest rosewood and mahogany furniture were sent to the asylum for storage, the only things to be taken along with the refugees being clothing, necessary bedding, some provisions, and the solid silver and valuables.

One of the soldiers, who was helping Uncle Abe wrap and pack the delicate china, watched Mrs. Battle admiringly as she directed the tearing to pieces of her home.

"By jinks, she's game!" he remarked. "She's as much of a soldier as Joe Johnston himself."

"Miss Sally, she ain't skeered er the debble

hissself," responded Uncle Abe, cutting his eye around the yard to see what his offspring were doing. "Whar's that ornery Pet!—I lay he's down in the front yard, overseein' the men diggin' the retrenchments! You, Lilian, you set Manassas on the grass, and go an' call that limb o' Satan! Tell him, if he don't come here an' hustle hisself, I'll skin him alive."

Mrs. Battle was a general. Her mother was bewildered at this crowning calamity, so the daughter had to superintend the force of workers at the Claiborne home, as well as at her own. She found an able and unexpected lieutenant in Cary, who, in the crisis through which she was passing, had developed a thoughtfulness and capacity undreamed of in her careless girlhood. Such transformations were all too frequent during those years of catastrophe! She and Blackie stayed over at Mrs. Claiborne's and directed the work of packing and removing the things, running over every now and then to report to Mrs. Battle, and get instructions from her. Mrs. Claiborne had given away entirely, and was utterly unlike her old busy, bustling self.

Mr. Claiborne tried to cheer her, as he was fastening on his spurs before mounting Prince for morning duty.

"Now, that it's all gone, Old Lady," he said, "I can bear it better. It was a bitter blow when the Pointe Coupée and Tensas plantations on the other side of the river fell in the enemy's hands;

and the loss of the Grand Gulf and Big Black places, and,—hardest of all,—our Ned's death, seemed more than I could bear. You and I haven't much longer to live, dear; it doesn't matter so much to us; but it was hard to give up my dreams for Sally and the children."

Peachie was standing by her grandfather, and as he straightened and took his bridle in one hand, he put the other on her bright curls and said:

"I had been planning that when this blessed child was eighteen I would give her the grandest ball ever seen here, and a check for twenty thousand dollars, with a trip to Europe, if she wanted it. But it may be you will be just as well without it, pet."

"But our home!" faltered Mrs. Claiborne. "To leave it,—to become homeless!"

"That is but a drop, when we remember all that has gone before," said her husband, kissing her tenderly. "We have our loved ones left, and, above all, the love and care of our Heavenly Father. *I will fear no evil, while He is with me.*"

Through a mist of foreboding tears Mrs. Claiborne watched her husband's slender, upright figure as he galloped away. Then, with a new feebleness in her step, she took Peachie's hand in hers, and went where Cary and Blackie were directing the loading of her superb rosewood parlor furniture in the wagons, to be carried to the asylum for keeping.

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By the morning of July tenth, General Sherman's army was reported but a few miles off, and the Battle house was alive with couriers bringing the latest word of his progress. General Loring was sitting on the front verandah, surrounded by his staff, giving them sharp and quick orders, punctured with the varied and complicated profanity for which he was famous.

"Why don't you just say 'dangnation,' like my Uncle Patrick, and save yourself the wear and tear of inventing so many 'cuss words'?" suggested Mr. Claiborne, who was standing near, with his arm over Prince's neck, waiting for his orders.

"I wish to the Lord I could!" groaned the general. "I wouldn't have Mrs. Battle hear me for a thousand dollars. But whenever fighting's in the air I've got to swear or 'bust.' It's the habit of a lifetime. And these boys," looking at his staff, "wouldn't think I was in earnest, unless I ripped out an oath to them with every order."

"The cannons are all mounted on the fort, ready for action," said one of the staff officers, "but you haven't named the fort, General."

The General saw Cary and Blackie coming over from the Claiborne house, and his face lighted as he said:

"Well, I'll name her now. Let the band come, and we'll march over and christen it. Miss Cary, come and go back with us a moment, and help us christen the fort."

Blackie ran in the house for his mother and Peachie and Mary Sue, and soon the little procession was formed. The one-armed general and the two ladies were in front, then the children, then the staff, closing with the band, playing "The Bonnie Blue Flag."

By the time the party had mounted the walls of the fort, with its shining cannon all ready for their deadly work, quite a little crowd had gathered. The General gave an order in an undertone, and as the band ceased the martial music and the cannoneers quietly took their places by their guns and put a blank charge in them, he said:

"This maiden fort will fire its first round of shot and shell to-morrow. I name it,—in honor of the fairest and sweetest lady in the land,—Fort Cary Battle."

Cary was taken completely by surprise, but she was not at a loss. The beautiful young girls of the South were an essential part of every military ceremony, and she had presented flags to a half-dozen or more companies and regiments, with appropriate speeches, and listened without a tremor to the salutes that were fired. So she now said in a serious and earnest voice:

"General Loring and Soldiers, I appreciate the honor you have done me beyond the power of my poor words. It is a light thing to give your name for the defense of your country,—you are privileged to give your lives for its service. May

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your service, whether by life or by death, be always for its glory and honor!"

General Loring motioned for Mr. Claiborne, who, stepping forward, with uplifted hands prayed as though his lips had been touched with fire. As the fervent petitions fell from his lips,—for their country and its salvation from their foes, for the soldiers so soon to look death in the face, for the dear ones from whom they were separated,—a pang smote Mrs. Battle's heart, and she opened her eyes to look into his face. And she saw a light there that filled her soul with awe and trembling.

As he uttered the solemn "Amen," the band burst into the "Marseillaise," every cannon fired a blank charge, and the General and all the staff officers came up and shook hands with the two ladies, while the soldiers around and those in the trenches threw their caps in the air and burst into a rebel yell.

"Have you got everything out of the two houses?" the General asked Mrs. Battle, as they were walking back.

"Everything that we can move," she answered. "Don't you think we had better leave to-day, General?"

"There seems very little prospect of Sherman's getting near enough to begin fighting to-day," returned the good General, "but there is no telling what the night may bring forth; and even if he does nothing to-night, he might begin the attack

early in the morning. So I think you had better leave this afternoon, and sleep across the river. I have had three tents pitched there for you, and if you care to have them, I'll detail one or two men to go along with you for protection till the Colonel catches up with you."

"I hardly think we shall need them, General," said Mrs. Battle. "We have Uncle Abe and Uncle Brown, and Ma will take Uncle Pompey and Tom. They will be sufficient for our needs."

"You don't feel any uneasiness about having only negro men with you in these unsettled times?"

"Why should I?" asked Mrs. Battle in surprise. "These men have been brought up in our families,—they are devoted to us. I would rather trust a negro man I know than a white man I don't know."

As the day wore on, the great empty house was filled with groups of officers talking earnestly. The observatory commanded a view of the country for miles around, and there was a steady stream of them with their field-glasses, going up and down the steps. The Battles were in the second story, all ready to leave, when Mary Sue clutched Peachie and whispered excitedly:

"There comes General Buford up the big stairway. I bet you my head, he can't squeeze up the narrow observatory steps."

"He certainly is awfully big," responded

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Peachie, with interest. "Wouldn't it be funny if he stuck fast."

They watched the big Kentuckian as he paused a moment at the door of the narrow, steep stairway, and viewed it with a calculating eye: he was certainly too broad to venture up! But the resourceful General turned himself sideways, and so mounted slowly and cautiously.

Just then Pet came springing up the big stairway, to announce that the carriage was ready. Cary and Blackie had gone with Mrs. Claiborne, so the little girls and Mrs. Battle and Mammy Viney were all that were to go. The other servants had been driven over before, to put things in order for the night.

Mrs. Battle had already gone through all the pangs of parting and renunciation, so she did not allow herself either a last look or a last tear for her beautiful ruined home. She was in a mood of exaltation that was common in those heroic days. She had withheld nothing from her beloved country! She had freely given her husband, and he had been spared to her, when so many noble ones had been laid low. How thankful she should be for that! And now he would soon join them, and it might be months before he would be exchanged. And she was able to escape from the enemy's lines, with all her dear ones—save the gallant boy who had been as her brother! It was not worthy of a daughter of

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the South (people thought in high-flown terms then) to yield to vain repinings.

The bridge over Pearl River had been destroyed at the former battle of Jackson, so they had to cross over on the pontoon bridge. Uncle Abe drove them up to their tents, which were pitched under some beautiful oak trees, and made a pretty picture, with the wood-fire at the back, where Aunt Ginsy was already bustling around, getting supper. Mrs. Battle found Mr. and Mrs. Claiborne, Cary, and Blackie already there, and Mr. Claiborne waiting to say good-bye to them.

"Won't you stay and take supper with us, Pa?" urged Mrs. Battle, looking at him with wistful tenderness.

"I think not, daughter," he replied. "I left Prince on the other side; you know he does not like to walk on a bridge of boats, and I have spoiled him so, I cannot bear to make him do anything he doesn't want to. General Loring may need me, so I'd better go back. I can eat with the staff, you know."

Mrs. Claiborne had been sitting quietly by, but as her husband rose to go, she clung to him, burst into sudden and bitter weeping, and sobbed:

"I must go with you, Old Man. If I let you leave me now, it will be for the last time."

They all tried to comfort her and reason with her, and she finally yielded; but she kept mur-

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muring to her daughter, as she held her in her arms:

"I shall never see him again,—I shall never see him again!"

The children walked back to the river with their grandfather, not realizing the depths that lay beyond the little parting. The open air, the white tents, the pleasant woodland sounds and smells gave them a feeling of picnic and adventure, and, in high spirits, they chattered with Mr. Claiborne.

However, after he had kissed all of them, a sudden quiet fell on the group, and they stood and watched him as he walked on the pontoons. It all remained a picture in their minds for many years: the placid river, the fringing trees, the bridge of boats, their dear grandfather (more bent of figure, more feeble of step than they had ever noticed before) walking slowly across, mounting his horse, and riding down the leafy road, out of their sight,—and out of their lives!

CHAPTER X

Our hearts are gone out, and our hearts are broken,
And but the ghosts of homes to us remain;
And streaming eyes and hollow sighs give token
From friend to friend of an unspoken pain.

Sidney Lanier.

THE car of the Battle party was a part of General Johnston's ammunition train,—an ordinary freight car, very much the worse for wear. When the order came for the train to move, the children and their elders would have to go with it. They slept in the tents that night, and when they waked the next morning Mary Sue said sleepily to Peachie:

"How it thunders! I am so sorry it is stormy, because we'll have to stay in the tents, instead of running round the woods."

"It's not thunder, child," said Blackie, raising up to listen from the adjoining pallet. "It's cannon! The battle's begun."

It was true. General Sherman began the attack on Jackson early on the morning of the eleventh of July, and all day the sullen roar of cannon, the scream of shells, and the sharp crack of musketry kept up. Being out of the usual range of the firing, the children soon got used to the

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mere noise and played happily on the river banks. But their mother and grandmother listened to it with white faces and sinking hearts, ever thinking of the dear one who was exposed to that deadly storm.

In the afternoon a drenching midsummer rain fell on them, and the thunder drowned the noise of the guns of Jackson. The lightning flashed without intermission, and both Mrs. Battle and Cary, who knew that a number of the cars were loaded with boxes of powder, could not but have a disquieting thought of what would happen, if a bolt should strike one of them. But they never thought of mentioning their fears, and the children sat perfectly content in their tent, oblivious of the destructive forces all about them, listening to Uncle Abe telling one of his stories of "Brer Rabbit and the critters."

Presently word came that in a half-hour the train was going to pull out for Brandon, twelve miles off. Immediately there was a hurried piling in their car of all their provisions, bedding, and cooking utensils, and finally all crowded in, and the heavy lumbering train slowly started off.

"I am so glad we got that message from Pa just before we left," said Mrs. Battle cheerfully to her mother. "How brave he is,—how noble of him to volunteer his services at his age!"

The bedding of the refugees was stored on both sides of the doors in the middle of the car,

and Mrs. Claiborne, looking very pale and weak, was leaning back against a nest of pillows.

"He was never afraid of anything," she answered, in a low, introspective voice. "When we were first married, the Choctaw Indians were over a great part of the State, and several times we had to flee before an attacking party. I remember his waking me one night, and we had to hurry into our clothes and hide in the woods till morning to escape the savages, and yet he was as calm as when we told him good-bye last night."

"I think somebody else must have been brave, too," said Mrs. Battle, thankful to see her mother talking again.

"There was nothing else to do but to keep your wits about you,—it was a matter of life and death," said Mrs. Claiborne simply. "And, then, we were so young,—we hardly knew what danger was."

"How old were you when you married, Aunt Claiborne?" asked Cary, with interest.

"I am ashamed to say that I was younger than you, Cary,—I was only fifteen years old; but everybody married young in those days."

"Those were good days! You didn't have to go to school long like we do," said Blackie, who was not studious, and looked on schools with disfavor.

"In those pioneer days there were very few schools to go to," replied his grandmother. "There was a little log schoolhouse near my

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father's, and I went there for nearly two years,—and that was all the schooling I ever got.”

A faint smile crept over her face, as she recalled those far-off days, and she went on musingly:

“We spent a great deal of time on the alphabet; every day, we repeated it in concert from A to Z; then backward from Z to A; then we would begin in the middle, or at any letter the teacher might choose, and rattle it off, either backward, or forward; then all the school together would sing the multiplication table, and the capitals of countries, and spell and read and write. And that was about the extent of our education.”

The children were charmed; they had never heard their grandmother talk of those bygone days in this way before. They crowded around her, and plied her with questions, and she seemed more like her old self than she had since the news of Ned's death had come. Something in their outdoor, nomadic life seemed to awaken an old chord of memory in her, and the hour and a half it took the slow, heavy train to reach Brandon passed all too quickly for them. Peachie felt she had looked into the dim land of old romance where her heroes and heroines lived, and was in a maze of happy thoughts.

They stopped at Brandon for the night, and again tents were pitched and supper cooked out of doors, and the young officer who was in com-

mand of the train came and ate with them at Mrs. Battle's invitation.

"If I were you, Mrs. Battle," he ventured, "I would go farther up the road, not so near the scene of battle as Brandon. Let me see! There is Hickory Station, some distance up, where there is a station house that I could put at your command. You would there be better protected from these summer storms than in tents, and you could store your bedding and necessities permanently in the house, until the colonel joined you. There is a telegraph station there, and a good operator,—so you would know what was going on at the front as well as at Jackson."

"We should like that very much," said Mrs. Battle. "Will your train be going up there soon?"

"No, I am to wait here for orders from General Johnston, but I will let the engine take you up to-morrow, if you say so."

The offer was thankfully accepted, all being delighted to have a roof over their heads again. Nearly every afternoon they had been having violent midsummer storms, with thunder and lightning and pouring rain; the tents leaked badly, and not only did they get wet but, what was worse, their bedding as well.

The next morning, therefore, they bade farewell to the long ammunition train, with its brakemen and soldiers, and the engine pulled them and their car up the road to Hickory Station.

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This was a lonely spot with a small station house (wherein lived the man that acted as agent and telegraph operator), and two deserted cabins, which were placed at the disposal of Mrs. Battle. As the engine puffed back, all had a feeling of gratitude for the quiet and peace and privacy of their surroundings. It was now the twelfth of July, and for the past week they had dwelt in crowds and tumults and the rending to pieces of all the old tender ties; now it seemed good to be alone again, without strange eyes and faces all about them.

For a while all was bustle and activity. One cabin was arranged for the white folks, the other for the negroes. The bedding was hung out to air and dry in the warm morning sunshine, and Uncle Brown and Uncle Pompey, who knew something of carpentering, set to work to build a shed and a rude fireplace for cooking, while Uncle Abe and Blackie and Pet sallied forth to cut wood. The women unpacked their "plunder" (as they began to call it), and Mammy Viney and Peggy made preparations for washing and ironing.

Mrs. Claiborne seemed better than she had been for a month. Her old knowledge of primitive life, which had lain away in a forgotten corner of her brain for a half-century, came back to her now, and she easily assumed command of their little colony. When she found a big iron

pot back of the cabins she laughed,—the first time for weeks.

"The very thing," she exclaimed, "for heating our water and boiling our clothes,—after it is well scrubbed! Here, Tom, Peggy can hang out those quilts without you! Come here and scrub this kettle thoroughly."

She sat and looked at it, thinking and smiling, while Peachie and Mary Sue hung delightedly around her.

"That reminds me of one of my father's neighbors," she said reminiscently. "He used to go around every week and borrow a pot to boil his clothes in. After a while, by some piece of luck, he became the owner of a pot, and thereupon visited all the families in the neighborhood, proudly announcing, 'Now I've got a pot of my own, I neither borrow nor lend.'"

"O Grandma," sighed Mary Sue, "what nice times those were!"

"After a while," pursued Mrs. Claiborne, "he bought some negroes and used to pray in the little backwoods church 'that the Lord would send rain at night and on Sundays, so that poor negroes could do their daily labor.'"

Leaving Tom to his scrubbing, Mrs. Claiborne went over to superintend the building of the kitchen fireplace and the thatching of the little shed roof with palmetto leaves. Under her efficient leadership, the refugee camp was reduced to order and system, before the afternoon storm came

up. The "white folks' house" and the "quarters," as the darkies named the two cabins, had their respective belongings stored in them, dry and well aired; the shed kitchen was ready for service, and the servants had their tasks assigned to them. They were so much more comfortable than they had been in their two nights' sojourn in tents that they had quite a feeling of luxury come over them.

"How nice it is to have a roof over our heads, instead of a leaking tent!" remarked Mrs. Battle, as they all sat in the little cabin, watching the pouring rain. "And what a good roof it is! It doesn't leak a bit."

"And how nice to have a dry floor to sit on, instead of the damp ground!" exclaimed Blackie, cuddling up against his mother.

"And how fortunate we are to have such a general as Aunt Claiborne to put our camp in such good order!" chimed in Cary.

"And the telegram that has just come from Pa, saying that he is safe, and our troops are still holding Jackson!" pursued Mrs. Battle. "And your father soon to join us, children! How thankful we should all be to the Good Father for all His benefits to us!"

CHAPTER XI

Many a home's in ashes now,
Where joy was once a constant guest,
And mournful groups there are, I trow,
With neither house nor place of rest.

R. B. Vance.

FOUR days passed quietly by, and the refugees gradually fell into a routine, just as in the old, orderly home-life. Every morning they had a telegram from Mr. Claiborne, telling of his safety and the progress of the siege of Jackson. The last one received said that the Confederates realized that Sherman's army was too strong for them, and that they would probably evacuate Jackson in a short time, to which was added the cheering line: "I shall join you in a day or two."

They knew that Colonel Battle would also be with them soon, and so Mrs. Battle and Mrs. Claiborne were quite cheerful at the thought of seeing their beloved soldiers again; and the loss of home and property was swallowed up in this great blessing.

The servants all had their easy tasks assigned to them. Aunt Ginsy and Aunt Dilsey reigned jointly and peacefully over the little shed kitchen; Mammy Viney had charge of the children; Peggy

was housemaid and lady's maid; Tom was butler and footman, and Uncle Pompey and Uncle Brown spent their time "projeckin' aroun'," as they called it,—making a kitchen table and some rude benches and shelves out of some old lumber that they happily found.

Uncle Abe was made chief of the commissary department, and every day was given a certain amount of money with which to buy supplies. To this he added a self-imposed duty that he greatly enjoyed, which was, a general supervision of the work of his fellow-servants,—not of the women servants, for they flatly rebelled against any intrusion on their domains. The two cooks soon gave him his "walkin' papers," as Aunt Ginsy phrased it, from the shed kitchen; Mammy Viney's and Peggy's labors kept them largely with the white folks, and Uncle Abe's idea of propriety never permitted his intrusion there. But he lorded it mightily over Tom and Pet and Lilian. He was the religious man of the colony, and felt frequently called upon to exhort all the "brethering" for their sinful practices.

On one occasion he sauntered up to where Uncle Brown and Uncle Pompey were doing their rude carpentering, and remarked in a friendly, patronizing way:

"Mawnin', genelman! how is yer, Brer Pompey?"

"Poly, thank God," responded Uncle Pompey shortly.

"An' you, Brer Brown,—how does yo' rumatiz segashuate?"

"Got a mis'ry all up an' down my laig," said Uncle Brown, sawing away on a plank.

"What makes you saw that-a way then? You knows Miss Sally don' want no sick man wuckin' fur her."

"You can't indulge the rumatiz," retorted Uncle Brown, morosely. "I gotter limber up my jints with wuck, else'n they'll git stiff as this bode. I wants to wuck,—that's what I'm here fur."

"So do I," cut in Uncle Pompey, with a side-long look at their monitor. "Wuck my hans, and not my jaws. I don' call chin-music wuckin'."

Uncle Abe ignored these amenities, and said in an insinuating manner:

"Brethering, I knows you both misses yo' yards an' yo' gardens youse tended so long. What a blessed comfort to think there'll be plenty of flowers in Heaven."

Uncle Brown was a man of few words, but he stopped his sawing, and said emphatically:

"Don' talk to me 'bout no flowers in Heaven! I hope to goodness there won' be a single one there. I bin wrastlin' wid flowers all my born days. I'd like some peace on the yuther shore."

"I 'grees wid Brer Brown," said Uncle Pompey, spitting on his hands preparatory to starting on a fresh plank. "I ain' keerin' fur no flowers up yonder, but I should like a few deer there."

Just then Tom lounged up, and Uncle Abe

turned to him, as more promising material for religious exhortation. As Tom was deeply smitten with Peggy, and an avowed suitor for her hand, he always listened respectfully to her father's homilies, and made generous promises of reformation. He was an expert dancer, and could "cut the pigeon wing" with an agility and grace that Peggy found irresistible. Against this sinful accomplishment, Uncle Abe now launched out into a long and loud philippic.

"But, Uncle Abe," pleaded Tom, "I takes speshual pains never to cross my legs when I'm dancin'; an' ole Satan can't get you, lessen you crosses yo' feet."

Uncle Abe skillfully declined an argument along this mooted point, and continued on a different tack.

"Then look how you picks the banjo for yuthers to dance,—you not only sins yoself, but you makes yo' bruther to sin. If you don' repent of yo' wicked ways, an' begin to get religion, ole Satan'll git you, sho's you're born; an' you don' git no chile er mine, that's flat."

"But, Uncle Abe," urged Tom, "religion ain't in the toes and fingers, it's in the heart. I done heard Ole Marse say so a many times. I don' mean no harm by dancin' and playin' the banjo. Ole Miss an' Miss Sally both say they's willin' fur me to marry Peggy; Aunt Ginsy say she's 'greeable, an' Peggy,—Lord bless you!—she's willin'."

"Not till you puts away yo' sins an' gits religion can you git chile er mine," retorted Uncle Abe obstinately, picking up his market-basket and stalking majestically away. He burst into the strains of "Climbing up de Golden Stairs," as he entered the road that led through the wood, and Tom grumbled to the sympathizing Pet:

"Yo' daddy is sholy a cranky nigger, boy! What harm is there pickin' the banjo and cuttin' the pigeon wing,—specially when the white folks is always atter you to do it?"

Pet, drawing Tom to one side, said to him in a low voice:

"I'll tell you somethin' 'bout Pappy, Tom, if you cross yo' heart and swear you'll never tell on me."

"Course I wouldn't tell on you, Pet," said Tom, going through the required formula.

"You know that money Miss Sally gives him to buy vittles evy day."

"Yass, boy."

"He don' spen' it; he jess goes in de corn fields and sweet tater patches and helps hisself,—an he puts the money in a stockin' foot an' keeps it. I done seen him do it."

Tom, his eyes glistening, said joyously to Pet:

"Glory be! I lay I follers him, and sees for myself. You hang 'round here, chile, an' answer Ole Miss if she calls me; tell her I'm gone to pick blackberries for dinner. If I ketches him

breakin' his religion he's gotter gimme Peggy,—shore."

Presently Cary and the children came out for their morning walk. There were a number of stately magnolia trees near the station, with a few late blooms still lingering on them, and the air was sweet with their fragrance.

"Peachie," remarked Mary Sue thoughtfully, as they strolled along the shady path, "are you sorry our houses are ruined, and we are refugees?"

"What a funny question, Mary Sue!" rebuked Peachie, with an air of propriety. "Of course I am."

"Well, I reckon I am, too," returned Mary Sue doubtfully; "but I do love to live out of doors."

Now Peachie in her heart was thinking the same thing. The peerless summer day, the wind gently stirring the tree-tops, the spell of the greenwood and of God's great out-of-doors was on the dreamy child. Now and then, when she compared their gipsy life with some of her adventurous heroes and heroines, she felt that she, too, was living in the realm of romance; but these things were too sweet and sacred to speak of, so she merely remarked in a matter-of-fact way:

"Oh, refugeeing does very well for summer, but it wouldn't be much fun for winter,—would it, Aunt Cary?"

"It is not hard for us to be refugees," said

Cary gently. "We have all we need now; but we must remember what terrible losses brother and Uncle Claiborne have suffered. They have lost the fortunes of a lifetime: two plantations in Mississippi, and two in Louisiana, with all the servants on them, besides the dear homes in Jackson. We must all try and be as good and helpful as we can, and remember what a heavy burden is on them to care for us."

"Mamma has her money in a belt around her waist," said Blackie in a low voice, looking around to see that no one heard him. "And that's all we've got to live on, till Papa and Grandpa come. I hope it will last till then."

"We're looking for Uncle Claiborne to-morrow," said Cary. "The telegraph operator says General Johnston cannot possibly hold Jackson any longer. And brother ought to be here soon, too."

All fell into a tender silence at the thought of seeing the dear absent ones again. They rambled slowly through the beautiful wood, and presently came out where the long, sunny, dusty road stretched out before them. It was too hot and lonely to continue their walk there, for there were many tramps and stragglers in the country; so they stopped at the edge of the wood, within calling distance of their camp, Cary sitting on an old stump, and Blackie and the little girls picking blackberries from a clump of nearby bushes. Blackie made a green cup, by pinning some of the

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stiff magnolia leaves together with thorns, and brought it to his aunt, filled with the delicious berries. Far down the road they could see two figures coming toward them.

"That must be Uncle Abe, coming back from his 'foraging,' as he calls it," said Blackie. "Oh, yes; I see him plainly now! And that's Tom with him. I do hope they have brought some chickens. I am getting awfully tired of the ham and bacon we brought with us."

As the two men drew near, the children could see that Uncle Abe looked downcast and dejected, while Tom was holding forth in a very fluent and condescending manner.

"Did you find plenty of things to buy, Uncle Abe?" called out Blackie. "I do hope you got some chickens."

"That he did, Marse Blackie," responded Tom. "An' he foun' rosinears, an' sweet taters, an' greens. An' I'm helpin' him to pack 'em home, 'cause he done promise me a mighty fine present."

"What is it, Tom?" asked Cary, eating her blackberries, as the two men paused in front of her. She was impressed afresh with the older man's depression and Tom's air of triumph.

"He gwine let me marry Peggy,—ain't you, Uncle Abe?" answered Tom in a hilarious tone.

"I am so glad!" said Cary, kindly. "I'm sure Tom will make her a good husband, Uncle Abe; you mustn't feel anxious about her." She looked

at the older man; and struck again with his crest-fallen expression, said with some asperity to his prospective son-in-law:

"Tom, I don't see any help you are giving Uncle Abe. Take that heavy basket and carry it to the kitchen. Don't you see he's tired? You ought to be ashamed of yourself to let him carry that load! I'm going to tell Peggy on you."

Tom, thus unexpectedly rebuked, took the market-basket and marched off with a sheepish air, while the older negro followed meekly in his wake.

"What makes Uncle Abe look so mournful?" asked Blackie, as the little girls joined them. "And yonder come two other men down the road; but I can't tell whether they are black or white."

"They look like tramps," said Mary Sue, scanning them with her keen young eyes. "Let me see! One of 'em has a long beard and a long coat."

"And the other certainly looks ragged," added Blackie.

"Oh, they are white!—I can see plainly now. Maybe they are deserters."

Cary gazed intently at the approaching pair, and then rose slowly from the stump where she was sitting, her face wearing so strange an expression that the children cried:

"What's the matter, Aunt Cary? Are you sick?"

The young girl uttered an inarticulate cry, pressed her hands to her heart, and then stretched her arms out, as though straining to reach something, and suddenly sank in a heap to the ground.

The frightened children hung over her, weeping and calling, and did not notice the two men had joined them, till one of them was on his knees by Cary, and had caught her up in his arms.

"Look out for that broken arm, Ned my boy," said a familiar voice. And the children, looking up, saw the beloved preacher, Brother Baskett, standing by them. Bewildered, joyful, hardly believing what their own eyes saw, they raced through the woods to the station, to bear to their mother and grandmother the incredible tidings.

Cary uttered a long sigh and slowly opened her eyes, while the young soldier held her in his arms. As she saw his face so near hers, she uttered a loud cry and flung her arms about his neck sobbing:

"O Ned dearest,—can it be you? Thank God, you are alive!"

It was Ned Chichester,—whom they had mourned as dead,—pale, gaunt, ragged, unshaven, but very much alive, as he murmured words of tenderness in Cary's ear.

Mr. Baskett was discreetly following the children, and the lovers were left alone in the wood for a brief while.

"We have mourned you as dead," breathed Cary. "O Ned dearest, how I have grieved that

I did not tell you I loved you when we parted at the plantation."

"And do you?" he asked, in ecstasy. "O Cary beloved, I had lost all hope that you could ever care for me. I love you so much! How beautiful,—how dear you are! And you are choosing me, of all your lovers? You are willing to be my wife?"

"If you will have me, Ned, I'll follow you to the end of the world."

"God is too good to me!" he cried. "I've lost all my fortune—I'm nothing but a poor, broken-armed soldier; but I'm richer this moment than ever before in my life."

CHAPTER XII

But hush!
He's praying, comrades, 'tis not strange
The man that's fighting day by day
May well, when night comes, take a change,
And down upon his knees to pray.
William Gilmore Simms.

THE sound of running feet and excited voices broke in on Ned's rapture, and in a moment all the little colony of refugees, white and black, was upon them; Ned was clasped in Mrs. Battle's arms, then Mrs. Claiborne's arms, with the children clinging to them, and the darkies crying in chorus:

"Praise de Lawd! Howdy, Marse Ned? God bless you, Marse Ned! Howdy, Marse Basket?"

Aunt Dilsey, who loved Ned as her own child, pressed forward and sang out hysterically:

"Is it my honey chile in de flesh,—or is he a sperrit?"

"He's no spirit, Dilsey," replied the preacher reassuringly shaking hands all around, "but he's got precious little flesh. We've tramped it from Big Black place,—been four days on the road, with nothing to eat but blackberries and the green corn we picked from the fields."

"Did you haf to pay for your corn, Marse Preacher?" asked Uncle Abe with keen interest.

"Lord, no, man! We had no time to hunt up owners; and then we knew that the Yankee foraging-parties would strip the whole face of the earth clean in a few days. Let's shake hands all round again. I feel like I was in a big meeting."

"You poor starving fellows!" cried Mrs. Claiborne, all her instincts of hospitality rising to the front. "Come, Dilsey; come, Ginsy, and get the best dinner you know how,—and see how quick you can do it. Tom, Peggy, Pompey,—come, every one of you, and lend a hand."

Mrs. Battle's practiced eye saw how weak both the soldiers were, so she would not let them be plied with questions till they were rested and refreshed.

"There will be plenty of time, when you are stronger, to tell your adventures," she said, as she led Ned and the preacher into the little cabin, where there were soap, water, and towels ready for them. "God has given you back to us from the dead, Ned,—that is enough for us. We can wait awhile to hear how it happened."

She laid out some of Colonel Battle's clothes for the soldiers, called in Tom to act as valet, and left them to the bliss of a bath and a change of clothing.

Presently Tom emerged with his arms full of discarded garments. He waved Blackie and Pet,

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who would have joined him, off with a peremptory gesture, saying:

"Don' come anigh these rags, chillun,—they's nachelly alive with bugs an' creepers. I'se gwine to burn all the yunder clothing, an' maybe the youter, too. I'll take 'em clean outside the camp to 'zamine 'em. Ter think of a fine genelman like Marse Ned wearin' such things as these!"

When the two men emerged from the cabin, clean and clothed in civilized attire, the children fell upon Ned, crying:

"O Cousin Ned, how lovely you look! Don't he look beautiful, Aunt Cary?"

Cary's happy, adoring eyes were more eloquent than speech. She sat by Ned Chichester at dinner, as if her rightful place were at his side, and kept his plate supplied with all the dainties that the table furnished.

"And how about me?" inquired Mr. Baskett. "If my appearance doesn't fill you with joy, then beauty has lost its power to charm. The Colonel's broadcloth makes me feel like a bridegroom. Don't your clothes and bath make you feel bridal, Ned?"

Ned made no response other than a most expressive look at Cary. But his appetite was certainly not unfavorably affected by his loverlike feelings.

When the meal was over, and they were seated under the trees, the good preacher said with a sigh of content:

"Sister Claiborne, that meal will always be one of the bright spots in my memory. I wish I had the tongue of angels to tell you and Mrs. Battle and Ginsy and Dilsey how good it tasted to me. I thought I was broken into starvation rations in Vicksburg, but this tramp took the cake. Praise the Lord for a good dinner, say I!"

Those were the days when men wore hair of some length, and such beard on the face as nature had placed here,—which was well, as barbers were not provided by army regulations. Mary Sue and Peachie immediately took possession of Ned's head, fingering his hair, and now and then giving it a becoming touch with their round combs.

"Oh, tell us, Cousin Ned, how you happened not to get killed," implored Blackie. "He can tell us now, can't he, Mamma?"

"If he feels rested enough," said Mrs. Battle. "Are you feeling stronger, Ned dear?"

"I feel as if I were made over," said the young soldier. "Nothing strengthens one like happiness."

"And food," added the preacher. "But fire away, boy."

"I don't know that I have much to tell," said Ned, simply. "The Federal forces were charging us outside of Vicksburg, when I felt a peculiar sensation, but no special pain, and I realized I must have been struck by a minie ball, as I was sinking to the ground. Just before I lost con-

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sciousness, I felt as though the hills of Vicksburg were falling on me—and I know it must have been the Yankees charging over me.”

“How wonderful that you were not trampled to death!” shuddered Cary, pressing closer to him.

“I can’t see how I escaped,—myself,” he said, taking the dear hand in his. “I know now, from what Mr. Baskett has told me, that our troops were repulsed and driven back to the city, and the enemy’s lines drawn up closer. So I was in their lines, and if I lived, would be a prisoner. I don’t know how long I lay unconscious. When I came to myself it was nearly dark, and I found I had been shot in the shoulder, which began to pain me very much. You know, Aunt Susan, I know all the country around Vicksburg like a book; I have spent so much time tramping and hunting all about there, when I would be staying at the Big Black plantation. So when I lifted my head cautiously to look around, I recognized my surroundings, and knew there was a ravine not far off. I felt that if I had strength to crawl there, I might hide, and possibly creep through the Northern picket lines,—if I could hold out to do it.”

The servants, who had hastily swallowed down their dinner, now stood a little distance off, listening intently, and every now and then uttering groans of sympathy,—or exclamations of joy.

“My blessed chile!” cried Aunt Dilsey, crowd-

ing up just back of Ned. "Sholy, the Good Lord watched over you."

"When it was quite dark," continued the young soldier, "I carefully worked my way through the dead and wounded men all around me. I was in great pain, but I knew I had no time to lose, as I could see the lights of the ambulance squads removing the wounded from the field. I was right about the ravine, and reached it finally, but dared to rise to my feet, and climb down to the bottom."

The little girls were so excited at this stage of the story that they clutched the narrator's hair recklessly and painfully, while Peachie cried out:

"O Cousin Ned,—and your wound! Didn't it hurt awfully?"

"It surely did, pet, but not much worse than my hair does,—the way you are pulling it now. I knew I had to get past their picket lines that night, or be captured," he continued, after the little girls had made apologies, "and a bullet in the shoulder seemed a mighty small thing compared to going to prison. The night air refreshed and revived me, and there was a blessed little stream of water at the bottom of the gorge. I was afraid I would drink it dry, I was so dead thirsty."

"Glory to God!" sang out Tom, who had been Ned's playmate, and loved him like a brother. Uncle Abe cast an approving eye on his future

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son-in-law at this expression of piety, and the narrative proceeded.

"My greatest fear was that a picket on his rounds might hear me. Fortunately, it was too dark for any one to see me down in the ravine. When I heard one of them tramping back and forth, I was almost afraid to breathe; but I crept by safely. I was pretty tired by that time, and would have liked to rest awhile, but I knew I could not sleep, for the pain in my shoulder was like some live, wild thing, tearing and wrenching my muscles and nerves. Possibly it was just as well I had to push on, for I was too close to the enemy's camp to take any chances."

"And did you have to struggle on all night?" asked Cary, her eyes overflowing with love and pity.

"I think I must have been out of my head at times, for when it grew light I found myself on the banks of the Big Black River, without knowing how I got there. And then there came the most amazing piece of good luck——"

"Providence," interjected the preacher.

"I believe the Good Father was caring for me," said Ned reverently. "I saw a negro sitting on the bank, fishing, and who should it be but Uncle George, the foreman of the plantation."

"I know he took good care of you," said Mrs. Claiborne, clapping her hands for pure joy.

"Yass, praise de Lawd!" said the servants in chorus.

"I was in a raging fever by that time,—and I don't know how he got me to his cabin. But he hid me and nursed me like his own child,—God bless him!"

"I wish't I'd a been dar to help him," said Aunt Dilsey wistfully. "But I know Sis Mimy, she done evy thing for you that woman could."

"But the bullet, Ned," said Mrs. Battle, the practical nurse; "is it in your shoulder yet?"

"Uncle George and Aunt Mimy got it out some way or other, Cousin Sally," answered Ned. "I didn't know anything for a week or ten days, and then I was as weak as an infant for a while. I had just begun to creep around the little cabin room, when Mr. Baskett turned up."

"And how did you happen to go there, Brother Baskett?" a half-dozen voices called out at once.

"Well, I suppose it is my turn to take up the wondrous tale now," said the preacher, combing his long beard with his fingers. "After the surrender of Vicksburg Colonel Battle got my parole papers arranged among the first: he wanted me to go over to the Big Black place and see about the servants there, and if there was anything left that could be turned into money. General Grant had taken a fancy to the Colonel, and gave him permission to let me leave ahead of the rest of the regiment. I suppose he thought a preacher didn't matter, anyhow."

"He didn't know they called you the 'fighting parson' in the regiment," interjected Ned.

Mr. Baskett made a deprecatory gesture, and said apologetically:

"I'm afraid I did do more fighting than preaching, but you see, Sister Claiborne, it was a fighting atmosphere, and I never could preach unless I was in the notion. I'm like the old Hardshell Baptist, who said that when he felt like preaching, it was as easy as it was for a river to run down stream, but when he didn't, it was harder than making rails out of black gum. There was precious little in Vicksburg during the siege to make a man feel like preaching. But to return to my story: When I got to the plantation, I found the mansion and the overseer's house burned to the ground, and not a horse, or mule, or cow on the place."

Mrs. Claiborne uttered a sob,—and then looked at Ned and smiled. What was the loss of property compared with the restoration of this dear boy, given back to them from the dead!

"The cabins in the quarters seemed all deserted, but presently I saw one with the door open and smoke coming out of the chimney. I went in, and there was Aunt Mimy cooking dinner, and Master Ned, as big as life, reading Uncle George's Bible. You could have knocked me down with a feather, Sister Battle."

"And where were all the servants?" asked Mrs. Claiborne.

"Gone to Vicksburg, to claim their fortunes," responded the preacher. "The last one of the

poor fools expected the Yankees to give them forty acres of ground and a mule to work it."

"Sholy, Uncle George didn' go way an' leave Marse Ned to hisself!" exclaimed Tom.

"No, indeed," said Ned, much moved. "He and Aunt Mimy nursed me back to life, and gave me the very best they had,—God bless them!"

"The Yankees had cleaned the place of everything eatable," pursued the preacher, "and the three in the cabin had been living mainly off the fish George caught and the blackberries he picked. He was off foraging when I got there. I knew Ned must get away as soon as he could; he wasn't paroled, as I was, and squads of the Northern army were scouring the country for supplies. I had to see several people around who owed the Colonel some money, in hopes of making some collections for him."

"And did you get any money?" asked Mrs. Battle anxiously. The belt around her waist was getting lighter, day by day.

"Yes, ma'am, I did (I'll report to you later). Ned lay low, while I was skirmishing around after shekels, and ate Aunt Mimy's good cooking, and at the end of three days, I felt he was strong enough to take the road. I got word from the Colonel, Mrs. Battle, that you all had left Jackson, and had pulled out to Brandon in General Johnston's ammunition train—so you were our objective point. By that time, General Sherman had moved on to Jackson, and the whole country

between was in the Yankees' hands. Ned and I decided we would tramp at night and sleep in the day,—there wasn't a horse or a mule to be had for love or money,—and make a wide circuit around Jackson. We've been on the road for four days and nights, and a tough time we had of it. And here we are!" wound up Mr. Baskett, in unexpected conclusion.

"And I'm free to join our army and fight, as soon as I get a little strength," said Ned, joyfully.

Cary paled, and pressed closer to him, and Mrs. Claiborne sighed; but Mrs. Battle said firmly:

"I'm thankful you can fight again for your country, dear boy. Things look dark for us now, and the South needs every one of her sons to fight for her freedom. When do you think Charlton can join us, Mr. Baskett?"

"As soon as Jackson falls. He said he must go there to get together what remnants of his fortune he can find. They won't let the paroled Confederates in there while the siege is going on. I expect, from what we heard when we passed through Brandon yesterday, that General Johnston will evacuate it to-day, and fall back to Brandon, where his supply trains are."

Mingled joy and sorrow filled the hearts of the little company,—sorry because of their country's calamities, glad at the thought of soon having the dear father and grandfather with them

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again, and, above all, profoundly thankful to the Heavenly Father for the return of the gallant young soldier from the dead. Mrs. Battle, looking at him with brimming eyes, said softly:

"It is meet to make merry and be glad; for this, my brother, was dead and is alive, was lost and is found."

CHAPTER XIII

All quiet along the Potomac to-night,
Except here and there a stray picket
Is shot, as he walks on his round to and fro,
By a rifleman hid in the thicket.

THE negroes were strolling back to complete their after-dinner tasks, now that the travelers had finished their talks, when Tom paused to say in an important manner to Uncle Abe:

"Now Marse Baskett's here, it's a good time for me and Peggy to get married."

Peggy giggled, and the rest of the darkies exclaimed in various ways, but Uncle Abe answered quietly:

"Wait here till we talks it over. Go on to yo' work, folks. Me'n Tom'll wrastle this out by ourselves."

When the others had reluctantly departed, Uncle Abe said to the astonished Tom,

"I done change my min'. Peggy she's too young an' skittish to marry yit."

"An' how 'bout them sweet taters an' rosinears an' greens what you tuck'n took,—an' Ole Miss' money what you got?" asked Tom, trying to put on a bullying air, but feeling an ominous sinking

of the heart. "Ain't you keerin' 'bout folks knowin' you's breakin' yo' religion?"

"How 'bout the corn an' taters what Marse Baskett an' Marse Ned took?" retorted Uncle Abe in a calmly triumphant manner. "Ef a preacher an' a genelman like Marse Ned can take things for theyselves, can't a nigger like me do it for his white folks? These is war times, boy, an' bofe armies takes things,—it's not stealin', it's foragin'. As for Ole Miss' money,"—with a highly virtuous air,—“I done give it back to her, of cose.”

Tom felt his hold on the father of his beloved slipping away from him, as he saw the force of his arguments. He dared not allude to the hoard in the stocking foot, that Pet had betrayed to him, on account of his oath, so he only said in a meek and insinuating manner,

"I sholy is sorry you done change yo' min', Uncle Abe, but I don't compose to complain. Me and Peggy can wait, I reckon. But you'll certainly let Peggy marry, when Miss Cary does,—won't you now?"

"Time 'nuff to think 'bout that," returned the father of Peggy, reveling in his restored sense of power.

The combined station-master-and-telegraph-operator had kindly offered to share his one room with Ned and Mr. Baskett; and when the two soldiers entered it that night he shut the door carefully, and said to them anxiously:

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"I've been trying to get hold of one or both of you for the past hour. There's bad news."

"What is it, man? Out with it quick," commanded the preacher, with a sinking heart.

"Mr. Claiborne was killed this morning as General Johnston's Army was evacuating Jackson."

His listeners stared at each other at this unexpected, crushing blow. How hard to give him up,—the gentle, beautiful old man! And they had thought he would be with them in a few hours!

"He's been more than a father to me," groaned Ned, sitting on the cot in sudden weakness. "How can we tell Aunt Susan and Cousin Sally?"

"We won't tell them to-night," said the preacher. "They are so happy over your return, my boy,—let them have this one night of peace and rest." After brooding awhile he spoke again: "The Colonel can enter Jackson as Sherman's army goes in. What a home-coming for him! His wife's father dead, his home in ruins, his fortune gone, his family refugees! What a savage and cruel thing is war!"

While they were speaking a telegram came from General Loring, at Brandon, saying the wires had been cut as the Southern army left Jackson, so, while Colonel Battle was undoubtedly there now, he could not communicate with them until he left the town and joined the Confederates.

Just then, Mrs. Battle knocked at the door, and called out cheerfully:

"I've got all my family to bed at last, and just came to see if you were comfortable. Have you had any farther news?"

The men started like guilty conspirators as she came in. Instantly her instinct taught her that something was wrong, and closing the door, she asked in a tense voice:

"What is it? Tell me quick!"

"The Colonel's all right," Mr. Baskett hastened to say.

"He's a paroled prisoner,—he's in no danger,—he couldn't fight! Don't keep me in suspense!"

"It's Uncle Claiborne," said Ned, clasping his cousin in his arms. "Killed to-day as our troops were leaving Jackson."

They clung together,—they had always been like brother and sister. How thankful they were that they were together when this terrible blow came! Mrs. Battle had been obliged to keep a brave front through so many calamities, because of the household that looked to her for leadership, that now,—when she had these strong, brave hearts to lean on, and there was no such pressure upon her,—she yielded to her grief like any other stricken daughter.

"He was so gentle, so good," she sobbed, "so full of love and helpfulness for all of God's creatures! How hard for him to go this way! O

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Ned, Ned, my heart is sick. How can I give him up? Brother Baskett, help me! Everything seems slipping away from me."

Dry, choking sobs rent her breast: the restrained grief of many days was at last finding expression.

"We broke it to her too suddenly, Ned," the preacher said remorsefully. "She's had more than her share. Lie down on the cot, dear lady; your father was one of God's saints. Weep for him, and for your dear mother. It will do you good."

"Pray for her,—her heart will break," breathed the daughter. "Oh, pray that this wicked, cruel war may soon be over!"

The three men knelt beside her as she lay trembling and shivering on the little bed. As the minister's deep, low voice pleaded for strength and comfort for those so sorely bereft, Mrs. Battle became quieter, and as they rose from their knees, the healing tears were streaming down her face.

"To whom shall we go, but unto Thee," she murmured. "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

They had all instinctively spoken in low voices, for fear the inmates of the cabin would hear them. They talked a while longer, and when Mrs. Battle,—her usual calm, courageous self,—slipped into her own little room, all its inmates were sleeping as peacefully as though no such

thing as war, with its terrors and heartbreaks, were within a few miles of them.

After breakfast the next morning, she assumed all the responsibility of breaking the dreadful tidings to Mrs. Claiborne. Taking her mother into the cabin, she closed the door, and in that rude little room mother and daughter faced their great loss together. Mr. Baskett took Cary and the children in the wood to break the news to them, and Ned, after warning the servants not to weep nor make any demonstration, for their "Ole Miss'" sake, told them of Mr. Claiborne's death.

After a while, Mrs. Battle came out to where the young soldier was waiting for her summons, and he went in, to comfort, as best he could, the kind heart that had been his refuge in all the problems of boyhood and young manhood.

Mrs. Claiborne was lying, pitifully pale and still, on a pallet on the floor. She had not yielded to any such paroxysm of grief as Mrs. Battle had.

"I shall go to him, though he will not return to me," were her words as Ned kissed her. "It will not be long,—and I am glad of that. How I wish that he had known that your life had been spared, dear boy. He grieved so at losing you!"

"He knows now, Aunt Susan," answered the young soldier. "And he was so ready to go! He was the best man I ever knew."

"He was spared the sad changes that have

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come," she said. "You younger ones can adjust yourselves to them; we were too old."

Ned noted with a pang that she spoke of herself in the past tense.

"I thought at first," she went on, in the same low, inward voice, "I must go to Jackson to see him put away, but Sally thinks I am not strong enough, and I know I am not. She says Charlton undoubtedly entered Jackson yesterday, and he will see to his burial in our lot, and among our own people."

It seemed an effort for Mrs. Claiborne to talk, and Ned urged her to lie quiet; she seemed to find great comfort in his presence, and every now and then would whisper,

"I am so glad you are here, Ned. I wish he could have seen you again."

Then she would lie very still, staring at the unceiled roof, with a far-off look in her eyes, as though gazing down the distant days.

She had always been of a practical turn of mind, so she knew when dinner was ready, and made Ned leave her and send Aunt Dilsey to her. She seemed to find comfort in the black soul's presence, and that of Uncle Pompey. Even Tom insisted on coming and sitting by "Ole Miss" a while. The childlike talk of these humble, faithful friends and servants seemed to soothe Mrs. Claiborne and one or the other of them stayed by her all the time.

The season of midsummer storms seemed to

have passed, and that afternoon Ned and the men of the little camp set up the army tent they had brought with them.

"It will be better for her to be off to herself for a while," said Ned, looking dubiously at the leaks in the top.

"But it hasn't rained for two or three days now, and even if a shower should come up, we could move her back to the cabin."

So they took to the tent the best mattress they had and made a pallet by it for Cary, who was to stay with Mrs. Claiborne at night. When Ned went to move her to her new quarters, he was distressed to find how weak she was, and he carried her across in his arms.

"I don't know what makes me so helpless," she said, as she sank thankfully back on her lowly bed. "Something seems to have gone out of me; I feel as weak as a baby."

Aunt Dilsey and Cary undressed her as though she had been a child. The old negro woman had been in the Claiborne household for many years,—first as maid, and then as cook,—and her mistress seemed to want her near all the time. Ever since they had begun their refugee life, the thoughts of this grandmother seemed to have turned back to the earlier years of her married life, and she and Aunt Dilsey kept up intermittent talk of that bygone time. Finally, she slipped into sleep like a tired child, holding fast to the

hard, black hand that had served her so long and so faithfully.

"She is so changed, Ned," said Mrs. Battle, with a break in her voice, after she had seen the children to bed. "She was always so practical and cheerful and bustling. The blow has been too much for her."

"But think of all that has gone before it!" ventured Cary, who was sitting with them a while before she went to the tent. "She and Uncle Claiborne were among the richest people in the State, with every luxury that money could buy,—and now she is lying, widowed and homeless, on a rude pallet on the ground, in a ragged, leaking tent."

"It does seem hard," said the preacher, gently, "but look how rich she is in memories of a well-spent, useful life. All the ravages of war cannot rob her of that, and that is what counts in the final reckoning. Houses and lands and servants cannot go with her on the last long journey, but good works,—they follow with her. The measure of justice is meted out, not according to what we have owned, but according to what we have done. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these, ye have done it unto me.' The world is permanently enriched by lives like those of your good father and mother, Mrs. Battle."

"O Mr. Baskett," cried Mrs. Battle, with a pang, "you speak as though it were all over. Do

you think the blow is too much for her,—that she cannot rally from it?"

"I do not know, dear lady; it may be it would be better for her to go with him she has loved so long. The changes and hardships before you would be very difficult for her."

They sat for a while in a tender silence; then Cary rose quietly, and kissing Mrs. Battle and pressing the hands of the two men, crept noiselessly into the tent. The others followed her example, and soon the little camp was all silent, but for the summer wind that gently stirred the tree tops.

But Mrs. Battle could not sleep. The wound in her heart must bleed; for the loving ties of a lifetime cannot be broken without yearnings and heartaches; so she lay for a long time, thinking how blessed had been her lot in having the encompassing care of two such saintly souls as her father and mother.

The soft breathing of the three children and the sound of the murmuring wind were beginning to lull her to sleep when she became suddenly wide awake; she thought she heard another sound, like the approach of an engine on the track. There had been no night trains at this time since they had been at Hickory Station, and she knew the passing of one meant something unusual. Presently she distinctly heard a footfall on the railroad track, seeming to come in her direction, and she sat up, listening to it draw nearer,

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her heart beating wildly. She stole to the door, so as not to rouse the children,—and there near the tent stood a tall figure, in a long army cloak, looking uncertainly from one cabin to the other! “Charlton!”

And with that soft, panting cry, she ran out in her nightgown and bare feet, to be clasped to her husband's heart. After whispering awhile, they slipped into their humble cabin, without waking any of the sleepers in their little refugee camp.

CHAPTER XIV

Wherever the brave have died,
They should not rest apart;
Living, they struggled side by side,
Why should the hand of death divide
A single heart from heart?

Father Ryan.

GREAT was the excitement next morning, when Colonel Battle stepped out of the cabin, where the children were still sleeping. Cary stole out of the tent, with her finger on her lips, saying that Mrs. Claiborne was resting quietly, and the excitable, warm-hearted servants had to express their raptures in whispers, for fear of waking her. Ned and Mr. Baskett soon joined the others, and they went a little apart from the camp, to one of Uncle Brown's and Uncle Pompey's benches, to hear the Colonel's story.

After he had shaken Ned's hand warmly, with a "God bless you, my boy!" he said:

"I entered Jackson with General Sherman's Army, after our troops had crossed Pearl River, and were well on their way to Brandon. I soon heard of Mr. Claiborne's death, and found his body where he had fallen,—lying in his own ruined yard. They said the retreat had begun and the firing had almost ceased when he fell. He had

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just left General Loring's staff, and gone back to his home after something, when he was struck by a piece of shell, and must have died instantly. His face had that pleasant smile on it that one often sees on those who die quickly in battle."

He paused a moment, to kiss his wife, who was weeping on his shoulder, and went on:

"We buried him in our lot in the cemetery yesterday morning. How I wished for you, Brother Baskett! But I was most thankful to find good Mr. Petrie, who conducted the service; and a number of our friends were there to see him laid away. How he was beloved by everybody! General Loring said last night that he was one of the bravest men he had ever seen, and was of great help on his staff during the siege. Your father's fortune has gone, dear love, but he has bequeathed you more than houses and lands and gold,—a noble, unselfish life, and a character the very soul of honor. I longed to hurry right on to you all,—as soon as I had put the dear old man away,—but there were many matters of business to attend to."

"Our homes," interrupted Mrs. Battle, "were they ruined?"

"Both burned to the ground," answered her husband. "It could not have been otherwise, for during a great part of the siege the fighting was fiercest in our orchard and in Mr. Claiborne's yard. General Loring thought both houses must have ignited from an exploding shell. There is nothing left to call us back to Jackson."

Mrs. Battle suddenly lifted her head from her husband's shoulder, and gazed earnestly at him. In the strong morning light, his face looked worn and lined, and she cried remorsefully:

"How hard for you, Charlton, to go back there and find nothing but death and ruin all about you! How selfish of me to give way to my grief, when you need all the help I can lend you to carry your load!"

"It was hard," said the soldier simply; "and it is hard to feel that our cause has had almost its death-blow in the fall of Vicksburg, which puts the Mississippi River,—from source to mouth,—in the hands of the enemy. And Gettysburg,—we hardly know yet, how much that defeat means! But I have you and Cary and the children and your good mother and Ned, given back to life. I have much to be thankful for. Sally told me of your escape last night, my boy."

"And don't forget me in counting your mercies," said the preacher, with his humorous smile. "And the good money I collected for you from the Big Black people,—remember that, Colonel."

"I do," said the Colonel, shaking his hand warmly, "and I am thankful also for the money I was able to get at Jackson. Our bankers are going to stay there and open up business as soon as they can; and they let me have enough to carry us to some sheltered place, and begin life again. The Lunatic Asylum, where much of our furniture is stored, was not hurt during the siege, and

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I brought some of it and my horses to Brandon yesterday afternoon. I was so impatient to see you all, that General Loring sent me here on an engine last night. I made it stop a half mile up the road, so as not to rouse and frighten you all. But I found one waiting and watching for me."

And the Colonel tenderly kissed his wife's pale face.

Just then the three children came racing toward them, and fell on his neck in a tumultuous and tangled embrace.

"Here, don't choke me to death," he cried, hugging all three together. "Stand off, and let me look at you. Bless me,—how you all have grown! Why, Blackburn, you are almost a man! Don't grow too fast, son, they might press you into the army."

"I wish they would—if I could be with you," said the boy, gazing proudly at his father.

"And Mary Sue! Why, I have no baby any more! And Peachie,—my tall, tall girl!"

And with all three clinging fast to him, as if they feared he might escape from them, they made a triumphal procession to the table, where the negroes crowded around him again, just as the children had done.

"Fix Ma some breakfast, Aunt Dilsey, and take it to her," said Mrs. Battle to the old darky, who was just coming out of the tent.

"Ole Miss is soun' asleep yit," said Aunt Dil-

sey. "I better let her sleep all she kin, hadn't I, Miss Sally?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" said Mrs. Battle hastily, but a little uneasily. "How strange that the children's noise over their father didn't wake her!"

As soon as Mrs. Battle had served all the table, and swallowed a cup of coffee herself, she slipped away into the little tent. In a few moments Cary followed her quietly, and all the rest, a little alarmed now, paused and looked after her. The young girl went in and then threw the flap back, standing there in the entrance, with outstretched hands, as if imploring help. Ned sprang to her side, and caught her as she was falling, and Colonel Battle and Mr. Baskett passed in.

Mrs. Claiborne lay on her back, her face, turned upward, wearing a placid, beautiful smile. So peacefully and restfully did she lie that no wonder Aunt Dilsey thought she was still sleeping.

Colonel Battle, lifting his wife from where she was stretched beside her mother, said tenderly:

"It is better so, dear love. She is with him she loved so well. She is mercifully spared many lonely hours and rough ways."

"That she should have passed all alone,—with none of us beside her!" said Mrs. Battle, her breast shaken with dry sobs.

"She was sleeping so sweetly when I left her," said Cary. "I noticed her breathing,—as gentle and easy as a child's."

The preacher, who was something of a doctor, felt Mrs. Claiborne's heart and pulse.

"She has only been gone a few moments," he said; "she passed from the sleep of life to the sleep of death without a struggle. Let us ask comfort from the God of all consolation in this new bereavement."

And he prayed as only those can who dwell in the presence of the Heavenly Father, and have walked with many mourning hearts out of darkness into light.

The little girls, who had been so constantly with their grandfather and grandmother, could not be comforted.

"I was her name-child," sobbed Mary Sue, "and I loved her so dearly. I can't believe she has gone away forever."

"And Grandpa, too!" wept Peachie. "Do you remember, Mary Sue, when he crossed the river at Jackson, and we watched him ride away down the road? Oh, how I loved him then, and wished he was not going away from us!"

"He has gone a more beautiful road than that, dearie, and to a more beautiful city than Jackson. Some day we too shall travel that road, and see them both again," said Cary.

Colonel Battle asked Cary and Ned to take the children into the beautiful morning woods for a while, and the little weeping company, with Lilian and Manassas added to them, soon found a quiet spot, where they all sat down together.

Cary's experience in grief stood her in good stead now. When she was grieving for Ned, while they all thought he was dead, the blessed comfort that Mr. Claiborne had given her came freshly back to her, and she was able to talk quietly and naturally to the children of those holy things that are our only stay when some beloved one passes from sight into the unseen world. The tears dried from the children's drowned eyes, and Peachie, staring through the green tree-tops to the blue sky above, asked wistfully:

"I am just sure they have gone up there, Aunt Cary; do you think, if I looked a long, long time up at the sky, that I would ever see their faces looking down on me?"

"I don't know, my little honey-girl," answered Cary. "But I am sure, though we may not see them again till we take that last journey ourselves, that they can see us. How disappointed they will be, if we don't try to be good, as they would want us to be!"

Ned thought he loved Cary as much as it was possible for man to love woman, but as he listened to her talking to the children of sacred things, and saw how they were comforted as they clung to her, his devotion to her took an even deeper and diviner tinge. Their courtship had been a sad and checkered one,—with death, disaster, and the shadow of an early parting upon them,—but it had its compensations in such revealing moments as these.

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"God bless you, beloved!" he whispered in her ear. "I shall try to be a better man,—more worthy to you and the dear saints who have left us."

When they went back to the camp, they found it had been decided to take Mrs. Claiborne to Jackson, and bury her beside her husband. Colonel and Mrs. Battle and Mr. Baskett were to take her there that afternoon; the burial service could be held early the next morning, and they could be back on the morrow.

"All except me," said the preacher, looking at them wistfully. "I have decided to stay in Jackson till I am exchanged, and then I'll join our army again."

"But, Brother Baskett, I thought you were going to stay with us all during your parole," said Mrs. Battle. "We would count it a privilege to have you as part of our household, wherever we may go."

"I'm a lonely man, and you and yours are nearer to me than any one else," he answered. "But I realize now that Jackson, where there is so much want and loss, is the place for me."

They could not dispute his word, and honored him for his decision.

That afternoon the sad little company started back to the old home to bury their dead. A car had been sent up to them from the camp at Brandon, with a plain pine coffin, and in this was laid the gentle, beautiful woman who had been so long

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used to every comfort that wealth and love could provide.

Ned found new revelations of sweetness and strength in Cary, as he saw her assume the leadership of their little colony; saw, too, how the children looked to her at every turn for comfort and guidance.

"There are compensations in loss and pain," he said to himself, as he watched her with the children haunting her every step. A young soldier-priest was serving as chaplain in the Confederate Army, and was writing verses now and then which touched thousands of hearts; some lines from his "Rosary of My Tears" kept running through the young lover's mind.

Bead by bead I tell
The rosary of my years;
From a cross to a cross they lead; 'tis well,
And they're blest with a blessing of tears.
Better a day of strife,
Than a century of sleep;
Give me, instead of a long stream of life,
The tempests and tears of the deep.

After their evening meal, when the day's work was done, Cary had the servants sit near them and talk of the dear dead, and sing some of the plantation songs that Mr. Claiborne had loved so well. Uncle Pompey and Aunt Dilsey had much to say of earlier days, and presently Peachie and Mary Sue were able to tell something of their many journeys with their grandparents to the four plantations,—to Grand Gulf and Big Black in

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Mississippi, and the Tensas and Pointe Coupée plantations in Louisiana.

"Grandma was always busy," said Peachie. "I remember her so often at the plantations, standing at the head of a long table, seeing about the cutting out of clothes for all the servants on the place, and giving them out to the women to sew."

"There wan't no sech thing as foolin' her about yo' work," confessed Tom. "You'd think you wuz all by yo'self, an' stop to play awhile, an', fuss thing you know, there stood Ole Miss lookin' at you."

"Yass, chillun," ejaculated Aunt Dilsey, "an' how she did look after the sick! She always give a blue-mass pill, no matter what you had. Many a one she's coaxed me to take, all hid up in plum jelly."

"How she did make us all drink sassafras tea in the springtime! And how I did hate it," said Mary Sue, making a wry face.

"I betcher, I didn't hate the cherry bounce she ust to give me sometimes when I wuz sick," chimed in Tom. "She sholy did make good cherry bounce an' blackberry cordial."

"When Mr. Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation, last winter, he freed good men and women like Aunt Susan and Uncle Claiborne all over the land, as well as the negroes," said Ned, in a low aside to Cary.

"Ole Marse, he cert'nly wuz a man er God," said Uncle Pompey. "He always got up early in

the mawnin', soon as it was light, and would set on the back gal'ry, readin' his testement. Ole Miss an' the little gals, they like to sleep er mawnin's, an' sometimes Ole Marse would drap off to sleep with his Bible on his knee, waitin' fur them, an' fur the breakfus bell to ring."

"Tom, you and Peggy sing some of the songs grandpa loved," begged Peachie. "Sing 'Dearest May.'"

Tom's beautiful tenor voice and Peggy's clear treble led off in the plantation song that Mr. Claiborne and Peachie had paused to hear in their last journey to the Big Black place,—the deep bass of the three older men, and Aunt Ginsy's and Aunt Dilsey's sweet, shrill voices swelling the chorus. They sang "Darling Nelly Gray," "Old Black Joe" and a number of others,—and then:

Roun' de meadows am a-ringin'
 De darkies' mournful song,
 While de mockin' bird am singin'
 Happy as de day am long.
 Where de ivy am a-creepin',
 O'er de grassy mound,
 Dere ole massa am a sleepin',
 Sleepin' in de cold, cold ground.

Down in de cornfield, hear dat mournful sound,
 All de darkies am a-weepin', massa's in de cold, cold ground.

CHAPTER XV

Adieu!—Such is the word for us,
'Tis more than word—'tis prayer;
They do not part who sever thus,
For God is everywhere.

COLONEL and Mrs. Battle came back from their sad journey the next afternoon, bringing another freight-car, with their carriage horses and Prince and Cary's mare and some of their furniture in it. General Loring came with them, too, and the little stir his visit made helped to hide the heartache all felt for those left behind.

"I hated to leave Mr. Baskett," said Mrs. Battle, kissing them all around, "and he nearly broke down when he parted with us; but I am sure he has decided right. The people in Jackson need him sorely,—almost every household has lost some dear one, and they are so destitute and needy. He can do much good there."

"And so, Lieutenant Chichester is the happy man," said the General wistfully, kissing Cary's hand in his gallant old-fashioned way. "He has my congratulations, dear lady,—he is a lucky man."

Cary blushed brightly, but said with spirit:

"And can't I have your congratulations, too,

General? And don't you think I am a lucky woman?"

"To be sure," acquiesced the General, wiping his bald head with his handkerchief, for it was a hot July afternoon. But his tone lacked enthusiasm.

"The Colonel tells me he will start on his travels in the morning," said Ned with a sigh. "I am strong enough now to go back to work; can't you find a place for me in your command, General?"

All the natural envy of a lonely (and susceptible) bachelor at the sight of young lovers passed as the General saw Cary's paling cheek; and he answered kindly and heartily:

"Of course I can; and I'll look after him, Miss Cary, and try and keep him from any more such romantic escapades as he has just indulged in. The Colonel is right to be moving on. The sooner he gets away from these da—blamed Yankees, and out of this forsaken State of Mississippi, the better. Our army will be on the move in a little while, too. Where we'll land finally, heaven knows—I'm sure I don't."

"We'll couple our two cars on the morning train to-morrow," said Colonel Battle, "and go on to Meridian, then over to Mobile, and then on up to Montgomery, Alabama. I have no idea yet where we'll finally settle. I want the most quiet, out-of-the-way place we can find."

"I'll tell you of a place I chanced on early in

the war," said General Loring, "about forty miles from Montgomery,—that is pictured on my mind as the most peaceful spot I ever saw. It is off the main railway line, and is reached by a little branch road of its own. It seemed to be the home of rich planters. I don't think I ever remember having seen such beautiful yards and shrubberies as I saw there."

"Were there good schools there?" asked the Colonel, whose main passion for his children was to give them a good education.

"Tip-top," answered the General; "two church schools, if I remember right. You may be sure those rich Alabama planters would have good schools for their children. Now what is the name of the place—Indian name, like so many of those Alabama towns. Tus— Tus— something."

"Tuscumbia?" suggested Cary.

"No—no! I have it now,—Tuskegee."

The Colonel wrote the name of the place in his note-book, and what General Loring had said about it. Like Abraham of old, he was going forth, not knowing whither he went,—his one object being to place his family as far as possible from the seat of war.

As they were talking over the details of the journey, Ned and Cary slipped into the woods, where the long evening shadows were lying thick on their path. They thought no one noticed them, but all eyes followed them, with that indulgent

sympathy that youth and love and sorrow always win.

"They are having a sad courtship," said Mrs. Battle with a tender sigh, "with the shadow of death over them, and this strange, hard, wandering lot, and their own parting,—who knows for how long!"

"And yet, having youth and love and life all before them, how rich and blest they are!" said the General, tugging at his mustache with his one hand. "It's a monstrous lonely thing to be an old bachelor, Mrs. Battle."

"Then why don't you marry, General?" she asked warmly. "I know of no one better fitted to make a woman happy."

"Too late, dear lady,—I've waited too long. I'm wedded to my profession. All I'm fit for is to be a soldier. Things look pretty dark for us now; if the war goes against us, I'll have to seek service in some foreign land. I wore the Union blue a long time before the war, but—God knows I could never wear it again. But about that boy:—he'd better go back to Brandon when the engine takes me to-night. There's no train back till to-morrow afternoon, and you'll be leaving in the morning."

"I believe you're right, General," agreed Colonel Battle. "And after all, a short, sharp parting is easier than one long deferred. Let them have this last walk without telling them—Mother and Viney can pack my knapsack for Ned,

and have it ready when you start after supper."

Thus it was decided. And when the lovers came back out of the darkening woods and were told of the plan, they cast one startled look at each other, and gazed pleadingly at Colonel Battle.

"It is best for Ned to go to camp to-night, Cary," he said gently; and they accepted the inevitable with the quiet fortitude with which people bore things in those hard, heroic days.

And so when, a little later, the parting time came, there was no lamentation, no repining. Ned held his beloved in a close embrace, then Mrs. Battle, then the children, and mounted the engine with the kind little General, leaving the refugee camp, with loving, cheerful faces beaming on him, and a chorus of good wishes from the darkies:

"Good-bye, Marse Ned! Take keer yo'self, Marse Ned! God bless you, Marse Ned!"

And the noisy, puffing locomotive bore the two soldiers out into the dark night.

"How Cary has developed!" remarked Colonel Battle to his wife. "I left her a child; I find her a woman. I believe my little sister will grow into such a woman as my wife. I could ask no more for her."

"It is one of the compensations of these dark times,—that they bring out the strongest and best in one," said Mrs. Battle. "Love and sorrow and patriotism will drive out the demons of meanness and selfishness,—if anything will!"

Cary and the children had gone in the little

cabin to get ready for bed, and the Colonel and Mrs. Battle were lingering awhile before they followed them.

"I was mighty proud of you, Sally, when General Grant told me of your interview with him. He is a man of few words, but you certainly made an impression on him. He showed me many courtesies, and I think it was because I had such a wife."

"He granted my request because you were my husband," retorted Mrs. Battle. "He said he knew of you and your guns in Vicksburg."

"He is the one great general the Union army has had so far," the Colonel answered. "Any of the rest of them would have given up Vicksburg, as Pemberton thought he was going to do. Oh, the mistakes that man has made! Think of his sending eight thousand of his garrison to General Bragg, with Grant's army and Porter's fleet almost in sight of the town! And then his failure to obey General Johnston's orders to effect a union of their forces! The man is honest and well meaning, but such a combination of poor judgment and unreasoning obstinacy is rarely found,—fortunately for the world. And Gettysburg!" he went on after a pause. "Think of two such crushing defeats to our cause as Vicksburg and Gettysburg,—almost at the same time! And Stonewall Jackson gone! The shadows are thickening around our poor country, dear love. God knows what the outcome will be!"

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The husband and wife talked until late in the night of the practical problems before them. Colonel Battle was one of those husbands who prized his wife's opinion on all things, and always consulted her fully and frankly about his business. While Mrs. Battle was her father's only heir, yet his magnificent estate was of little immediate value to her,—with his great plantations and many servants,—except Uncle Pompey's family,—all in the enemy's lines. Colonel Battle had been enabled to collect enough ready money to relieve them from any cause for anxiety for some time to come.

"But," he concluded as they rose to go to bed, "we must try and buy a little home, with enough land to raise on it what we eat. Abe and Brown and Pompey and Tom can cultivate a good tract of land—but, dearest, we shall have to live on a much simpler scale than we have ever done before."

"Now we are together again I can bear anything," said the high-hearted wife.

They had an early breakfast next morning, and soon they were in the midst of the confusion, attendant upon breaking up camp, and packing their belongings into their car, so as to be ready to couple on to the morning train when it should come along. The little company was not unwilling to leave the place, where death had so sorely bereaved its numbers; at every turn there was

something to remind them of the gap in the circle of loved ones.

"How good this kitchen fireplace did dror!" said Uncle Pompey, gazing mournfully at it. "An' Ole Miss, she pintly showed us how to put every stone in it."

"An' that pot for bilin' clothes," mused Tom, gazing sentimentally at it. "How she did make me scrub it! She sholy wuz the bes' mistis I ever had."

"An' the onlies' one, you gump," said his mother, emerging from the shed kitchen, with a small tower of kettles and pans in her arms. "Want you borned in Ole Miss' back yard? Don' you hear Miss Sally callin' you, boy? She's yo' Ole Miss now. Stop moonin' over dat kittle, an' git a move on yoself."

"I tell you, Brer Brown, I hates to leave dat good kitchen table behin', an' dem benches what we made," remarked Uncle Pompey, looking with pride on these triumphs of his skill. "Praise de Lawd, we's got some hosses once more! How dat Prince makes me reckomember Ole Marse!"

When Cary had rendered all the help she could, there was still a half-hour before train time, so she stole off through the path in the woods to the place where she had caught her first glimpse of Ned, as he and Mr. Baskett had tramped along the hot, sunny road.

"It was here I was sitting, when I first saw him," she murmured. "I wonder my heart did

not break from pure joy. I can never complain of anything, now that he has been given back to me! Dear woods, where we have sat and talked,—dear road, where he walked! I shall always love you! You will always be pictured on my heart."

She sat on the stump where she had been resting when she recognized Ned, and from a grateful and humble heart she thanked the Good Father who had restored her dead to life and love.

"I will not grieve because we are separated," she resolved, "I will not fret and cast a shadow on others because he has gone to the front again. I will commit him and all my fears into the hands of the dear Father, who loves us and cares for us. But I hear the train,—I must hurry back."

The cars came noisily in as she joined the others, and there was much excitement among the darkies in getting settled in their places. The four negro men and Pet went in the car with the horses, Aunt Ginsy, Aunt Dilsey, Peggy, Lilian, and the baby in the other freight car, and Mammy Viney went in the day coach with the white folks.

At first the children, after their week of roughing it, were quite impressed with the splendor of the car; and its shabby red plush seats,—that hit them in the most tender part of their spinal columns,—struck them as the height of imperial luxury after having only logs and stumps to sit on. The motion, jerking and uneasy as it was; the beautiful morning; the passing panorama of the summer woods; above all, the presence of the

dear father, made it a happy journey to them. And when Mammy Viney handed around the lunch that had been prepared for them, they ate with as much enjoyment as they had felt at the rich feasts to which they were accustomed in the old, easy home life.

But as the day grew warmer, and the afternoon wore on, Peachie said with a sigh:

"How nice our freight car is, and how I miss Manassas and Lilian!"

"So do I," said Mary Sue, fidgeting on the slippery seats.

"Can't we ride with them awhile, Mamma?"

"Yes, if your Mammy Viney will go with you, and you promise not to sit near the openings in the car."

Mammy Viney was nothing loth; so at the next of their numerous stops, she and the two little girls were transferred to the congenial circle in the freight car,—Blackie declining to leave his father, even for this delightful change. It was at once touching and beautiful to see how the boy hung on his father's words and looks. Happy the son who finds his dreams and ideals incarnated in the one who gave him birth!

And happy the children who had the faithful servants of those past days for their caretakers and companions! The ties of those times had a permanence that made them seem all but like the ties of blood. There was a strain of loyalty in those old servants, a simplicity, a grasping after

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the pleasure of the passing moment, a freedom from care, a capacity for wonder, that made them perfect companions for children.

So when the little girls were seated on the floor of the car, with Peggy and Lilian playing games with them, and the little brown baby, happy after his usual nap, crowing beside them, their cup of joy was full to the brim. Lilian, whose imagination never faltered, always had some new game ready for them; and if they got tired of impersonating the creatures of her brain, Peggy, who had a beautiful, clear voice, would strike up a song, and all would join in, with hearts as free from care as the birds in the Southern woods through which their slow train was passing.

CHAPTER XVI

All the world seems dark and dreary,
Everywhere I roam;
Oh, darkies, how my heart grows weary,
Far from the old folks at home.

Stephen Foster.

So many long and frequent stops were made that the Battles did not reach Meridian till dark, and there they were obliged to detach their two cars from the passenger train, and couple them on to the slow moving freight. Their unknown destination was some point east,—as far from the seat of war as possible,—and the best railway connection they could make was to go by way of Mobile.

From this time on, the journey became tedious,—often acutely uncomfortable. Sometimes the car would be sidetracked for hours; but not a word of complaint escaped our refugees,—there was not even a complaining thought in their hearts. It was a time when people gladly gave up all for their beloved cause and country,—when high-hearted courage and patriotism were at a premium.

Mrs. Battle could not but feel a desolate pang at quiet moments when she thought of the old folks at home,—in their last, long home; but to

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no one but her husband did she show the still bleeding wound; and his sympathy, at once tender and bracing, was her best stay and comfort,—next to her strong Christian faith.

"How thankful I am that they both went at the same time," he would say. "In their death they were not divided. I pray that you and I may go in like manner."

And when his wife's loss would come over her like a swelling tide, he would press her close to his side, and say:

"What a blessing that they were spared long sickness and helplessness! And the new, unknown way before us,—how hard it would have been for them. Dear, we have much to be thankful for when we think of the time and manner of their going."

"I know,—I know!" she would sob. "And how blessed I am that you were with me when this great loss came! I am not unmindful of my blessings; but, dear love, you must bear with me for a while. I miss them so,—I miss them so!"

His was not only the gentle hand that could touch and heal her fresh and bleeding wound, but he was her pillar of fire by night, and of cloud by day. She, who had borne the burden of responsibility and leadership so courageously during the siege and separation, now found an exquisite sense of relief in committing all her cares to him.

Colonel Battle's genial and hopeful temperament made his presence a constant well-spring of

joy to all the little company. They counted all they had lost as naught, compared with the blessing of having him with them, honorably relieved from service or danger until he should be exchanged. What mattered rude fare and rough quarters while he was their leader!

He had been not only brother to Cary in her early orphaning, but father and mother as well. It seemed to her almost too good to be true that such an ardent patriot and soldier as he should be having this quiet time with them, when fighting was going on all about. And she would not permit herself to think despondently of her soldier lover,—again at the front; he had been returned to her from the dead; she could surely spare him again to his country after this unspeakable gift!

Blackie was his father's shadow; proud to do his meanest errand, hungry for the least tale of the siege that would fall from his lips.

Peachie and Mary Sue rejoiced in his presence as did all the rest; they thought nothing of the unaccustomed discomforts of their lot. There was motion, variety, many things to see, and all their little world journeyed with them. Both in the children and the servants there was a nomadic strain that made their wandering life far from unpleasant to them.

The journey from Meridian to Mobile was not great in distance, but the slow travel and frequent stops of the lumbering freight-train made it take several days. The conductor was most consider-

ate of his passengers, and gave them entire possession of his caboose; so they were spared much that would have been almost unbearably uncomfortable. When the train stopped, he would always notify them if they were to be side-tracked for some time, so they could get out and rest themselves by the grateful change.

As they were nearing the beautiful Southern city, expecting to reach it in the afternoon, the order came for the train to take the side track for an indefinite time. The kind conductor told Colonel Battle that they would be there for several hours, and that it would be perfectly safe for them to get out for a while, and cook a warm meal.

Joyfully the party began to disembark, glad of the chance to get out of their cramped quarters, and especially thankful for the opportunity to prepare some fresh food.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning of a royal July day; not far off was a little river,—bordered with cypress trees, palmetto bushes, and a patch of young cane,—hurrying on its way to the great Gulf; a little way up the sloping bank was a noble grove of live-oaks, with long streamers of gray moss floating like silver banners in the pleasant morning breeze. Certainly they could not have wished for a more ideal place in which to picnic.

"I lay I goes fust thing to git some water an' green truck fur my hosses," said Uncle Pompey, scrambling to the ground.

"An' I jines yo' company," remarked Uncle Brown, getting the water-buckets and the sickle to cut the tender young cane.

"These critters looks mighty poly an' peaked with the long trip; couldn' we take 'em out a while, Marster?"

"I'm afraid to try it," answered Colonel Battle. "Then there's no platform to land them on. Anyhow, we'll get to Mobile by night, unless we have mighty bad luck. It's only thirty or forty miles away. When we get there, we change to a boat, to cross to the eastern shore of the bay."

"Papa, can't Pet and I go fishing?" asked Blackie. "He's got some hooks, and he's already found some bait."

"All right, my son, some fresh fish would be most acceptable after our unbroken diet of ham ever since we left Meridian."

Cary and the little girls and Lilian joined the fishing party and were soon equipped with poles from the canebrake, and tackle and bait from the provident Pet. All the negroes looked longingly and enviously after the departing group, for fishing is dear to the heart of every darky. Aunt Ginsy, who was skirmishing with the pots and pans, called out warningly to her offspring:

"Mine you behaves yoself, you mischeevous boy you, an' stick to yo' job, an' fetch me a pan of fish to fry in a jiffy. An' you, Lilian, don' you let that baby tumble in the water. Here, Peggy," she cried to her daughter, who showed a disposi-

tion to join the fishermen, "take this bucket an' go up the rail tracks to them blackberry bushes an' pick me a mess for dinner."

"Never mine, Tom, Peggy ain' needin' yo' help," said Aunt Dilsey, skillfully heading off her son, who was following in the wake of his beloved. "You take this knife an' cut me some wile greens,—I lay there's plenty over by that cane patch; an' hurry up, for greens loves a long bilin'."

Uncle Abe had built a fine fire, and soon a noble pot of bacon and greens was boiling merrily. The fishing party returned presently with a long string of frying fish, and Peggy brought her bucket heaping full of blackberries.

Never was a feast more enjoyed! After a long diet of cold lunches, every appetite was prepared to appreciate the fresh, sweet fish and crisp bacon, the tender johnnycake, the fragrant coffee, and the delicious blackberries. The white folks were a little shy of Aunt Dilsey's mess of wild greens, but the darkies made up for any lack of appreciation on their betters' part.

"Wile greens is cullud folks' food," said Uncle Abe, helping himself generously from the pot. "Pot lickin' an' fat meat an' johnnycake is good enuff for me, gen'lmen. Sis Dilsey, you sholy is powerful at a fish fry."

"So's Aunt Ginsy," said the diplomatic Tom, always anxious to ingratiate himself with the mother of his lady-love. "Ef my wife can cook like Aunt Ginsy, I don' ask nothin' else."

"What noble trees these live-oaks are!" said Colonel Battle, taking an after-dinner stroll with his wife and Cary and the children down to the little river. "They are handsomer and larger than with us. You know we are more than a degree south of Jackson, and this is their native habitat. Well, we've had a feast fit for a king! I don't think I've been as hungry since I was a boy. When I used to go to the little country school in Kentucky we had to stay all day, and we used to take our dinner with us. My dear old mother always fixed me up a nice lunch, and if ever I looked in the basket and saw how good it was, my mouth would water so that I would stop and eat it all up before I got to school."

"And what did you do for something to eat all day?" asked Mary Sue, who delighted in stories of her father's youth.

"Did without, honey; but you may be sure I made up for fasting when I got home to supper that night."

"I think old-time schools were nicer than those to-day," said Blackie, who was not studious. "I wish I went to a country school."

"You wouldn't have liked my school much, my boy," answered his father. "Do you see that cane-brake there on the river? I know my teacher has worn out as many switches on my back as there are canes in that patch. I hated him so for it, that I resolved I would never whip a child as long as I lived. That's the reason I never switch

you, children. I want you to obey me for love, not fear."

They sat quietly by the river for a while, watching it hurrying between its green banks as though it knew the great Gulf was near, and could hear the deep voice calling to it to come and lose itself in the broad, shining waves.

"I hope," said Mrs. Battle, watching the children leaning against their father, "that wherever we may land, there will be good schools. It does not look now as though we would have a fortune to leave the children, but we must not fail to give them a good education."

"The more I think of it the more I like the thought of that Alabama town General Loring told us of," said Colonel Battle, taking out his note-book. "I see that he said there were good schools there, and that it is not far from Montgomery. I think we'll stop off at Montgomery, Mother, and make all the inquiries we can, and if things sound favorably, I'll go over to Tuskegee and see about either buying or renting a place."

"I believe that will be a good plan," agreed Mrs. Battle. "If you like, I could leave Cary in charge of the family at Montgomery, and go over with you to Tuskegee."

The party reached Mobile that evening, in time to transfer their belongings to the boat in which they were to cross the bay next day.

The journey from there to the capital city was accomplished in a briefer time and with less dis-

comfort than any of their previous wanderings. Colonel Battle's inquiries about Tuskegee were so encouraging, that he determined to go over on a "reconnoitering expedition," as he called it, and after placing the family at a quiet hotel, he and Mrs. Battle left on the next day.

The two days that they were gone were spent pleasantly by Cary and the children in visiting the places of interest in this first Confederate Capital. They went through the beautiful State House, where the first Confederate Congress was held, and stood on the spot where President Davis stood when he was inaugurated.

But devoted little patriot as Cary was, the letters that came to her there from Ned were of far more interest than even historic Montgomery. He wrote very cheerfully: General Loring had made a place for him on his staff, with the rank of Captain, and was most kind and thoughtful. He was growing stronger all the time, and was taking up his military duties again with all the zest of the born soldier.

When Colonel and Mrs. Battle returned, they reported that they had found Tuskegee even more desirable than they had expected. They had bought a small farm about two miles from town,—a piece of land that they had, fortunately, found on the market, and they were to take possession as soon as they could get there.

There were so many things to be done in the next few days that the children hardly saw their

father and mother and aunt. While they had some of their furniture with them, yet they lacked many things before even the simplest kind of house-keeping could be attempted. As a farm wagon was one of the needful things, it was determined to buy one, and pack it full of their belongings, and let Uncle Pompey drive through the country to their new home, with Uncle Brown and Pet riding the saddle-horses. There was no risk, as the country was perfectly quiet; it was only forty miles, and a good road, so the journey could be easily made in two days,—even less.

"Only I wish," said Colonel Battle, "that I had a white man to go along with them. Negroes are excellent to follow, but they are poor hands to take leadership. And then in these war times some people might not understand a party of darkies in charge of four valuable horses, and a wagonload of furniture. They might be taken for runaways."

"Why couldn't I go with them?" asked Blackie, drawing himself up to look as tall and manly as possible.

His father looked at him thoughtfully, and said after a pause:

"You can go, my son, if your mother is willing. What do you say, dear?"

His mother quailed a little at the thought of a boy of twelve assuming such responsibility, but she only said:

"If you think it is all right, Charlton,—and he

wants to go,—I have no objection. I want him to be all the help to you he can."

Blackie was a proud and important boy when his father put him in command of the little expedition and gave him written directions and a map of the road, so that his small company could not go wrong. They started early in the morning, Blackie on Cary's mare, Uncle Brown on Prince, and Uncle Pompey driving the carriage horses in the new wagon, with Pet sitting beside him. Mrs. Battle was as proud as Blackie as she watched the peaceful little cavalcade disappear down the street, and she breathed a prayer of thankfulness that he was not riding away to the war.

"It is really a great relief to me to have our boy in charge of the party," said the Colonel to her. "Darkies are such children, and have so little judgment; if anything puzzling should turn up, I am sure, Mother, that Blackie will do all that is necessary."

All the rest of the refugees left on the afternoon train, which connected with the little branch road that took them to Tuskegee. It was nearly dark when they got there, and as they drove through the town in the dark, they had a vague impression of ample lawns, with Cape jessamine hedges, and glimpses of white houses through clustering vines and grouped shrubberies.

CHAPTER XVII

Bear witness with me in my song of praise,
And tell the world, that since the world began
No fairer land hath fired a poet's lays,
Or given home to man.

Henry Timrod.

THE Battles spent the night at the little hotel. When they saw Tuskegee the next morning they were charmed with it. It was, as General Loring had said, a town of homes, where the once rich Alabama planters lived. The houses were the typical Southern mansions, surrounded by beautiful and well-kept grounds. There were two large schools,—one for boys, the other for girls,—several churches, and just enough stores to supply the needs of the people.

As they sat on the hotel porch the next morning, waiting for the shabby old carriage (which Colonel Battle had bought) to take them out to their new home, the stillness and peace of the place impressed even the little girls.

"You don't hear a sound," said Peachie. "It seems as if everything and everybody had gone to sleep."

"These sandy streets deaden sound so that even the passing vehicles seem to make no noise," re-

marked Cary. "And what soft voices the people have! Did you notice how loud our voices sounded at breakfast this morning compared with other people in the dining room?"

"They don't need to speak loudly to be heard in this still air," answered Colonel Battle. "Do you know that most of the people here have never seen anything of the war? They have never laid eyes on a Yankee soldier, and the only soldiers of ours they have ever seen are the men in the company that was formed here,—the Tuskegee Rifles. It seems wonderful when we remember what a storm-center we have come from. It must be because the town is on a little branch railway that it seems so far off from everywhere. I said I wanted to get as far from the seat of war as possible, and I think my wish has been granted."

"How thankful I am," said Mrs. Battle fervently, "that our trials and wanderings have brought us to this peaceful, restful place!"

"I'm afraid that you won't get much rest for a while, Mother," said the Colonel, as their little rockaway drove up. "You and Cary will have a strenuous time getting our new home in order, I fear."

Their farm was about two miles beyond Tuskegee, and their favorable impression of the place was increased as they drove along the streets, shaded with magnolias and water-oaks, with beautiful homes on either side. As they passed outside the town, they still found comfortable-looking

places, set far back in green groves. But presently they came to a noble pine wood on either side of the sandy road, and an even deeper feeling of peace and quiet fell upon them, as they heard the morning wind whispering in the tree-tops.

"Our place is just beyond this wood," said Colonel Battle, who was driving. "Let us all make up our minds that it is a good home, and be thankful for it, and not grieve over what we have left behind. There are the servants, and the wagon load of our 'plunder.' I started them off early this morning so they would get here ahead of us, and begin to unpack the things."

The house, as its new owner drove up to it, looked rather pretty; surrounded as it was by some handsome trees, and built in what we would now call a bungalow style. A wide verandah extended around three sides, and two halls ran clear through it both ways, crossing each other at right angles in the center; there were four rooms downstairs, and two in the half-story above.

"Our mansion is mostly halls and porches," said Colonel Battle cheerfully, helping his family out of the rockaway. "If there is any breeze straying around, we are bound to catch it here."

The little girls were charmed. They raced back and forth through the rectangular hallways, and all around the broad verandahs, then explored the four downstairs rooms, and mounted the steep little steps to the rooms above, with their dormer windows and sloping roofs. Later Peachie and

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Mary Sue joined Lilian in investigating the kitchen and servants' quarters, and were full of enthusiasm about it all.

"I have slept in a tent so long," observed the good Colonel, "that the thought of sleeping under a roof as a regular job seems the height of luxury to me. Children, it is no fun when the winds blow and the rains descend, to wonder whether your tent will leak, or blow over, or not."

"Don't we know?" retorted Mary Sue, with an experienced air. "Haven't we slept in a tent that leaked like a sifter?"

"I beg your pardon, little refugee. But come, Mother,—come, Cary,—let's walk in the yard and garden, and see what we can see. The people who owned this place decided very suddenly to move away, and it had just been vacated and offered for sale when I bought it. One of the inducements to purchase it was that there were some growing crops and fruit on it."

"What queer-looking cabbages!" said Cary, as they entered the weedy, ragged garden. "I never saw anything as tall and lank and ungainly in my life."

"They are collards," replied Colonel Battle, who was a famous gardener, "a kind that runs all to stalk and leaf, and never comes to a head. And look at the squashes—the very thing that one doesn't want! But I take it all back! Here is a fine lot of sweet-potato vines, and some butter-

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beans, too. And there are some late peaches and pears on those trees!"

"And what is that growing on the other side of the fence?" asked Mary Sue, climbing up to pull a peach.

"Let me see," said her father, looking over. "Children,—a perfect treasure,—they are goober peas. And there is some sorghum in the next field. We'll make some molasses as soon as it is ripe."

The children were much excited when their father pulled up some of the goober vines, and they saw the nuts at the roots. As they chewed away on these little kernels, they could not foresee that they were being introduced to the peanut, the national favorite of coming days.

"We'll raise lots of things on this little farm," said Colonel Battle, with all the zest of the born agriculturist. "These peaches are delicious; I'll plant some trees this fall, if I can find some nursery stock,—and if I am not exchanged before November. I have always thought that the fall was a better time for transplanting than the spring. I don't doubt this is a great peach country."

A commotion was heard as the party started back to the house, and the Colonel caught sight of a welcome procession coming up the carriage drive—the new wagon, with Uncle Pompey and Pet on the driver's seat, and Blackie and Uncle Brown on horseback.

Blackie seemed to have grown an inch taller

since he had parted from his family in Montgomery, and he reported their safe and successful journey to his father in most impressive terms.

"We didn't lose our way a single time," he said, feeling like a general at the end of a successful campaign. "We took our time, because there is a heavy load in the wagon for the horses to pull, and it was hot, for sure. We camped last night where there was plenty of good water, and made an early start this morning. And here we are!"

"And a fine trip you have made of it, my son," was his father's hearty greeting, while his mother kissed him proudly. "The horses are all right, are they, Pompey?"

"Fine as silk, Marster," answered the old coachman. "Lord, but they wuz glad to hit the big road agin, atter bein' penned up in them cars so long!"

It was Pet's first separation from the bosom of his family, and Aunt Ginsy and Peggy and Lilian hailed him as a traveler returning from a far country. Even his father unbent from his wonted paternal sternness, and Manassas positively refused to be parted from him.

"It wuz a fine thing to take that long ride," he said to Lilian, when his mother returned to the preparation of dinner. "Sometimes Uncle Brown would let me ride ahind him, and sometimes Marse Blackie would let me ride the mare. An' jess to think,—I ain' had a single whippin' fur nigh two days!"

"To think er that!" said his sister, with envy and admiration. "But you better walk straight, boy, or you'll catch it 'fore night. I hears Pappy callin' you now. Pass me that baby quick, an' make tracks to him, or he'll knock the liver lights out er you."

After they had eaten their dinner on the shady verandah Mrs. Battle and Cary began a systematic and thorough investigation of the house, and came out where the men were unloading the wagons, with rather pale and depressed countenances.

"Our warfare is not yet accomplished," said Mrs. Battle. "The house is alive with every variety of insect and beetle known to me, and I think I shall learn of some entirely new species. And I believe the place is infested with mice and rats, too. We will just leave our furniture on the porches, until we have cleaned the house from top to bottom."

Next morning bright and early the entire establishment began a sanguinary campaign in the interests of cleanliness and sanitation. They fortunately found some wall-paper in one of the Tuskegee stores, and Tom and Uncle Abe scraped all the old paper off the walls, and gave them such vigorous disinfecting treatment, that never a bug or insect was left when they hung the fresh new paper.

After every inch of the windows and floors and woodwork had been scrubbed several times, and

clean matting put on the floors, the Battles began to look upon their refugee home with pride and growing affection. The ever hopeful and cheerful Colonel beamed on it with admiration as the last furniture was moved in place, and the last skillful touches were given by Mrs. Battle and Cary.

"To think how many poor refugees are wandering without shelter now," he said, "and we have this comfortable home! How thankful we should be to the good Father for having guided us to this safe and quiet place! Mother, you and Cary are born home-makers; I believe you could make a hut habitable and attractive. After all, there is no need for so much room, and furniture, and bric-a-brac. But I do miss my books," he added.

"So do I," said Peachie fervently. "I had just begun to read 'Quentin Durward,' and I do so want to know how it all turned out."

"I think, little daughter, I'll write to Jackson to have them shipped here. We only want such things sent as we actually need, for one never knows what a day may bring forth in war times. But, really, one can't live without books."

They were all making a tour of inspection, and were now proudly regarding the little parlor, without a disparaging comparison with the spacious drawing-room in the old home, with its rich furnishings.

"Wasn't it fortunate we could get this piano?"

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said Cary. "Now I can keep up Peachie's lessons, and practice myself, so I won't forget all that I learned at school."

Mrs. Battle was of a more anxious frame of mind than her optimistic family, but even she was constrained to say:

"Of course, we cannot entertain as in the old home, and we really have all the room we need,—a parlor, a dining room, one family room, and a guest-chamber downstairs, and two bedrooms upstairs for Cary and the children,—and all this hall and porch room to sit in!"

"I'm certainly glad we could have a spare bedroom," remarked the hospitable Colonel. "It would have been pretty hard not to have a place to put a guest in! And now that we have the house in such beautiful order, all hands must turn to getting the garden and yard in shape, and going over the outbuildings, and, may be, putting up some new sheds."

The yard was a wilderness of weeds and ragged grass, and as Uncle Pompey sharpened his scythe for the fray, he remarked privately and disparagingly to Pet, who was to follow him with the rake:

"I never seed such a scanlous place in all my born days. To think er bedbugs in white folks' houses! I thought no pusson but cullud people ever had bedbugs in they houses. An' this yard is worse'n a brier patch! I lay the folks what lived here wuz pore white trash. Never have nothin' to do with the pore white, boy,—they's

commoner than a corn fiel' nigger. Always 'sociate with the quality, like our folks."

Under the long, sweeping strokes of his scythe, weeds and tangled grass and tree-sprouts were soon laid low, and Pet, with rake and wheelbarrow, hauled them off in a corner to be burnt. Neglected vines were trained, and half-dead rose-bushes and shrubs trimmed. The fences and gates were mended and whitewashed, and the house given a coat of paint. Soon they all began to feel a pardonable pride in their Alabama refugee home.

The garden responded to Uncle Brown's skillful touch, and order came out of chaos. Late vegetables were planted, and soon flourishing green rows gave promise of a fine fall and winter garden.

The Colonel entered upon the management of his little sandy farm with as much zest and skill as he expended upon the planning of a military campaign. A pair of cows were found; hogs were bought to fatten for the winter meat; a start in poultry was made by the purchase of some turkeys and chickens, and such crops were planted as the late season permitted.

Being of that open and social nature that loved to take the whole household into his confidence, the Colonel said in one of the family councils:

"We must make every edge cut on this little farm. There are many mouths to be fed,—six white people, and ten servants, besides Manassas.

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We must raise everything we can to eat, and I see plainly that we shall soon have to provide our clothing here, too. I have spent most of the money I brought here with me to buy and equip this farm, and prices are not only soaring higher and higher all the time but things are getting so scarce that we cannot buy them for love or money. I tried to get some soap and candles when I went into Tuskegee yesterday, and there is none in town. We shall have to turn in and make things for ourselves."

CHAPTER XVIII

Oh, yes, I am a Southern girl,
And glory in the name,
And boast it with far greater pride,
Than glittering wealth or fame.
My home-spun dress is plain, I know,
My hat's palmetto, too;
But then it shows what Southern girls
For Southern rights will do.

War Song.

THE busy days slipped by, and soon the middle of September came,—the time when the schools were opened, and the little girls started to one of them, and Blackie to the other. Mrs. Battle and Cary soon made the acquaintance of their kind neighbors, and the charming people in town gave them a cordial welcome. Life began to flow in the quiet round of a well-ordered family, when each one had his appointed work to do.

Ned was a constant and voluminous correspondent, and Cary always shared his letters with the family. A little while after they had left Mississippi, General Johnston's army had evacuated Brandon and moved on to Enterprise. Later in the summer his command was ordered to Tennessee, and joined General Bragg's army, near Chattanooga. The great battle of Chickamauga was fought there in September, but General Johnston's

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division was stationed at Kingston, fifteen miles off, as a reserve, and was not called into active service.

Ned chafed a great deal about not being in the big fight, and wrote indignantly:

"To think of being near enough to hear the music of the guns, and not firing a shot."

"Music of the guns, indeed!" mocked Mrs. Battle, with a smile and a sigh. "What a fireeater the boy is! I should think his experience at Vicksburg would have cooled his love of fighting."

"He says," pursued Cary, "that there are rumors that General Johnston is to supersede General Bragg in command of the Army of Tennessee, and the soldiers all hope it is true."

Ned's later letters told of the distribution of parts of the Confederate forces in Northern Georgia,—he was stationed at Dalton, with the prospect of being there for some time to come.

"There is evidently going to be a campaign in Georgia," said Colonel Battle. "Atlanta is a strategic point, because it is an important depot of supplies, and on account of its railroad connections. I should not be surprised if it were the next great objective point of the Northern Army. Now that General Sherman has superseded General Rosecrans in command at Chattanooga, we may expect things to be pushed with vigor when the season permits. You know, Atlanta is only about a hundred and fifty miles from

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Tuskegee. The first thing we know our peaceful little town will be in the thick of it. War seems to follow in our wake."

But no matter whether the war came near them again or not, the old primeval struggle of humanity was upon them,—the struggle for food and raiment. The great reverses to the Southern cause at Vicksburg and Gettysburg had increased the rapid depreciation of Confederate currency, and prices soared sky-high for the most ordinary necessities of life. Two hundred dollars was asked for a barrel of flour, and from three to four dollars for every bushel of meal; butter was seven dollars a pound, and sugar ran up to almost prohibitive prices. Meat could not be had, unless some of the neighbors killed beef or mutton; even bacon and ham had reached such exorbitant prices that Colonel Battle's fast-diminishing hoard could only buy them in the smallest quantities, and coffee and tea could not be bought at any price.

The substitutes for coffee became as varied as there were products that could be toasted and ground: goober peas and sweet potatoes were favored ones with the Battles; if they could only have foreseen Postum Cereal as the drink of health, it might have reconciled them to these unpopular substitutes.

A kettle for making soap was soon set up in the yard, under Aunt Dilsey's supervision, and every scrap of waste was utilized by her for this household necessity. Some old candle moulds

were purchased, and tallow candles were made, but they only served to make darkness visible. As the evenings became long and chill, and they gathered around the open wood-fire, our refugees found they could sew, or knit, or read, much better by the bright blaze of the fat pine-knots than by the dim, guttering light of tallow dips.

To the children's great joy the field of goober peas bore abundantly, and the whole family ate them with relish. Every evening a great basket of the roasted nuts was set on the table after supper, and the coming popularity of the peanut was foreshadowed in the way they disappeared.

"I wish I had ten times as many as I have," said the Colonel, tossing a handful of shells into the fire. "The cows have been giving twice as much milk since we have been feeding them the vines and nuts, and the hogs fatten on them as well as on corn. As soon as it gets cold enough we'll kill our hogs, Mother."

Mrs. Battle gave a sigh of relief. In these days of scarcity, it was no easy thing for the housekeeper to provide the daily food for the table.

"Sausage, spare-rib, backbone and pigs' feet!" cried Blackie with unction. "My,—how I wish it would turn cold!"

"And we'll begin on our sorghum molasses to-morrow," continued the cheerful Colonel. "We shall be glad to have something sweet,—shan't we, little girls?"

The children put aside their school-books, and

gathered close to their father for one of the family talks they loved so well. Cary and Mrs. Battle were busy plaiting strips of bleached palmetto into braid to make into hats for the family, and Cary asked:

"And your peach orchard, Brother,—when will you plant your trees?"

"The nurseryman promised to have them here this week. As soon as they come I will set all hands to planting them. This is a great peach country, and they come into bearing earlier than any other fruit."

"What a blessing for us that you haven't been exchanged yet," said Blackie, leaning on the back of his father's chair. "How could we have started things off without you?"

"You must be learning how to run a farm, my son," said the Colonel, "and take all the care off your mother that you can when I go back to the front."

"I'll try," said the boy stoutly. "If you want me to stay home from school, and learn to help now, *I'm* willing."

This self-denying proposition created covert smiles in the family circle, as Blackie was not famous for love of his books; but his father said kindly:

"No, my Blackie boy, you must go to school and learn all you can,—we never know what war times may bring forth. If I can give you chil-

dren nothing else, I want at least to give you a good education."

"I don't know how I am to get clothes for them to go to school in," said Mrs. Battle with a sigh. "We grown folks can manage pretty well for a while, but the children are harder on their clothes, and then, they are growing so fast. The clothes we brought with us are nearly all too small for them,—and worn out, as well."

"We must get some spinning-wheels and a loom," said her husband, "and begin to make homespun. I'll attend to it to-morrow."

"We can't begin too soon," said Mrs. Battle, putting up her palmetto braid preparatory to going to bed. "I think I have enough plaited to begin sewing my hat to-morrow, Cary, and I believe you have more than I,—you are so nimble with your fingers. Come, little girlies; come, Blackie,—tell your father good-night. It's time for children to be in bed."

The weaving of homespun for the family clothing was soon started, and all the women of the household took turns at the spinning wheels and the clumsy hand loom. Mrs. Battle and Cary soon became experts in the use of the simple dyes they had to use,—indigo and copperas and walnut and logwood. They sometimes marvelled at how soon they accommodated themselves to these forgotten and strange industries of pioneer days.

It was a time when every hour had its appointed task. When carding, weaving, spinning, sewing,

were out of the way, there was the everlasting knitting always ready; all the family footwear was home-knit, and Cary became quite expert in knitting gloves,—not only mittens but her gloves with fingers were considered miracles of skill. And there were always the socks for the dear soldiers,—the task that was never finished. No matter what visitor came, the knitting was always brought forth, and conversation never stopped the click of the steel needles. Mrs. Battle and Cary could easily finish their pair of socks a day, and Peachie and Mary Sue were each expected to knit a sock every Saturday, unless other tasks were given them. After her father's library was shipped from Jackson, Peachie could not resist getting one of her beloved books, and trying to knit and read at the same time. The result was many dropped stitches, and calls for help from Mary Sue's deft fingers.

The making of sorghum molasses was a pleasant outdoor festival. The juice was put in kettles out in the yard, and as it boiled down to the right consistency, it smelled so good that the children could not tear themselves away. Pet sniffed the savory odors hungrily, and remarked aside to Lilian:

"I feel like I could lick 'lasses till I die."

In that mild, lovely climate, it seemed as though it would never turn cold enough to kill their hogs, but about the end of November a little cold snap came, and all hands were put to work preparing

their needed store of meat and lard. Certainly nothing was ever more welcome than these additions to the family larder.

Fortunately there was a pine wood on their farm, and after all the farm and garden work was finished, the four negro men were set to work cutting wood for their winter fuel. As the Colonel watched the neatly piled cords of wood growing daily, and thought of the hams and bacon curing in the smoke-house, and of the things they had raised on the farm, even with their late coming, he would never tire of saying to his wife, or to any member of the family that was near:

"How thankful we should be for our blessings! 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.' We have no lack of food in this time of scarcity, and Dilsey and Viney and Peggy are turning out a good lot of homespun every day, so that we have wherewithal to be clothed, too."

Mrs. Battle smiled at her husband's indomitable hopefulness and cheerfulness, and said, but without enthusiasm:

"Cary and I finished a homespun outfit for the children this week, and it is a relief to know that they have clothes that are strong enough to stand their hard usage, and that fit them. I haven't much to say about their beauty."

"They are all right; and whether the coarse clothes are beautiful or not the wearers are," declared the proud father. "I have never seen the children look so well; their plain homely fare and

busy life certainly agree with them,—and with all of us.”

The husband and wife were taking their evening stroll, and had drawn near to the pine wood, where the woodchoppers were at work.

“What a fine climate this is,” continued the Colonel; “here it is two days from Christmas, and the air is as mild as May. And how fragrant the pines are!—they make the atmosphere as bracing as it is balmy.”

“We almost live out of doors,” said Cary; “that is one of the secrets of our perfect health.”

“It’s a great thing,” pursued the inveterate optimist, “to have a place that not only raises your food but furnishes your fuel also. And pine-wood is certainly the best wood in the world for burning. Look at that splendid, tall tree,—just ready to fall! How many good fires and how much good light it will furnish us!”

They stood quietly by as the great tree crashed to the ground, watching the woodmen stripping the limbs off. The long shadows, the tall pines swaying and sighing in the gentle evening breeze, the rhythmic sound of the falling axes, the call of a passing colony of black birds,—all made a scene of placid and perfect beauty.

“And to think that men are marring this beautiful world with battle and murder and sudden death!” exclaimed Mrs. Battle. “Oh, how I wish this cruel war was over!”

“So do I,” said a voice behind them. “I hope

your antipathy to war doesn't extend to warriors, Mrs. Battle. Have you a word of welcome for two poor, homesick soldiers?" And Ned and General Loring appeared before the Colonel and Mrs. Battle. They had slipped up behind them as they were enjoying the charm of the quiet evening. In a moment Ned was in a tumultuous tangle of arms and kissing all the Battles (Cary included) again and again.

"But where did you two drop from?" asked the Colonel, shaking General Loring's one arm nearly off. "You seem to have fallen from the skies."

"We seem to have dropped into heaven, instead of out of it," said Ned, kissing them all around again. "And to find you all in this safe, lovely spot! How well you all look! I don't think," he said, gazing at Cary, with his heart in his eyes, "that I ever saw people look as beautiful as you do."

"Thank you, Ned," replied the Colonel, modestly. "It cheers me to have my beauty appreciated. But where did you come from?"

"From Dalton, Georgia," answered General Loring, watching Ned, with the negro men and Pet crowding around him, and shaking both his hands. "I was detailed by General Johnston to make an inspection tour of Atlanta and surrounding points, and brought Major Chichester with me——"

"Major Chichester," cried the children joyfully, while Cary gazed proudly at her soldier lover.

"Yes, Ned has been promoted,—if Colonel Battle doesn't look out, he'll catch up with him," said the good little General.

"What's the matter with his catching up with you?" asked Blackie, who was a firm believer in the military gifts of his father and cousin.

"I shouldn't be surprised,—at the rate he is going!" said General Loring. "Well, after we had finished at Atlanta, we had to go to Columbus,—only forty-five miles from here,—so we couldn't resist running over to get a glimpse of you. We only decided last night we could come. So here we are,—for a day or so!"

"Oh, surely you can stay till after Christmas," urged Mrs. Battle. "We couldn't let you go before."

The visitors had only thought of remaining a day and night, but after calculating, they decided they could stay a day longer, leave on Christmas night, and get back to headquarters in time to report to General Johnston, who was to reach camp in north Georgia the day after Christmas.

"And I don't mind telling you privately, Colonel," said General Loring, as they walked back to the house, "that General Johnston is to supersede Bragg. He takes command of the Army of Tennessee on December 27th."

CHAPTER XIX

I fill this cup, to one made up
Of loveliness alone;
A woman of her gentle sex,
The seeming paragon
To whom the better elements and kindly stars have given
A form so fair, that like the air, 'tis less of earth than
heaven.

—*E. C. Pinckney.*

THE next two days were festal times in the calendar of the Battle family. To have their dear soldier and their friend with them in this first Christmas in their refugee home was a boon beyond their wildest dreaming. Ned was family property, and it never entered the mind of the lovers to stray off to themselves. It was enough that they could look into each other's eyes, and hear each other's voice, and that Cary's place was always by his side. She felt that it would be inexcusable selfishness to take Ned away from those who loved him so dearly, when his stay with them was to be so short.

Ned and General Loring had so much to tell of the recent campaign in Georgia and Tennessee,—of Lookout Mountain, Orchard Knob, Missionary Ridge, the Battle above the Clouds,—that it was far into the night before the company could bear to separate.

But even while relating some thrilling incidents of the battles, Ned's mind would constantly stray to the lovely face beside him, and bits of poetry, like the one at the head of this chapter, would wander through his mind and make strange lapses in his speech.

The next morning, Cary and the children, including Pet and Lilian and Manassas, bore Ned in triumphal procession over the new home, and proudly exhibited their treasures,—the wood-pile; the smoke-house, with its store of ham and bacon; the barrels of sorghum molasses; the loom and spinning-wheels; the soap-kettle; the two cows; the chickens and turkeys, and the winter vegetables in the garden.

"And what," said Mary Sue, impressively throwing open the door of a little house, "do you think that is, Cousin Ned?"

"Looks like some sort of hay," answered the soldier. "But what are the nuts on the vines?"

"Goober peas," cried the children, "the best things you ever ate. We did feed some of them to the cows and hogs, but we saved these for ourselves. We are going to pick the nuts off the vines when we get a little time."

"Don't you think, Cousin Ned," asked Blackie, with a thoughtful pucker in his brow, "that we've done right well on our farm, when you think we didn't get here till the last of July? And don't you believe we'll be able to get along till we raise next year's crop?"

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"You know," said Peachie, "Papa has spent nearly all his money, buying this place and the things we had to have."

"And everything is so awfully high!" chimed in Mary Sue.

"It's perfectly wonderful what you have done," said Ned, marvelling at the way these children, reared in ease and luxury, talked and looked at things. "How proud Aunt Susan and Uncle Claiborne would be of you all, if they could see you."

"I often think," said Mary Sue, musingly and tenderly, "how Grandma would have enjoyed the weaving and spinning, and soap-and-candle-making, and all the things we refugees have to do."

The round of stores and farm exhibits finished, Cary and Ned, with the children and Uncle Pompey and Pet, got in the farm wagon and started for the big pine wood, to get a Christmas tree.

It was one of those still, serene winter days that often come in that warm climate; the sky was of unbroken azure, except a few motionless, massive clouds at the horizon; the air was clear and bracing, but with a touch of caressing warmth, as though the lingering autumn were loth to leave. As they turned into the wood-road, the tall, straight pine-trunks stretched away in endless vistas, like aisles in a pillared cathedral. The young soldier, who was a poet as well as a lover, was keenly alive to the charm of the perfect day, as well as to the presence of the beloved one at his side.

"How pleasant the light is after the glare of

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the white sand road!" he said. "It sifts through the lofty pine-tree tops, and makes a kind of green gloom,—grave yet cheerful. And how peaceful and still it is!"

"And though it is so still, yet there is a murmur in the tree-tops," said Cary, falling in with his mood. "It always sounds to me as though there were voices, trying to whisper something in the pine woods. I sometimes feel that there must be a spirit that dwells in them."

"And the call of the crows chimes in with the stillness, like a bit of harmony," murmured Ned. "And to have you with me makes the one perfect day of my life."

They were sitting on the back seat of the wagon, and were more alone than they had been since he came the night before. He drew closer to her and said:

"Beloved, I was never so happy in my life. The world is so beautiful, and you are so unspeakably dear to me. Since I have loved you,—since I know that you love me,—my heart has awakened to all things lovely and noble. Look at that gleam of silver water in the distance,—it shines like some long-wished-for goal."

"That's the creek, Cousin Ned," called back Blackie, who was sitting in front of them, and had caught his last words. "There's fine fish in it. We're going down there to try and find our Christmas tree."

The creek, which was a clear little stream flow-

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ing over a sandy bed, was bordered with palmetto bushes and deciduous trees. Now and then there was a holly tree, all aglow with its scarlet berries. Blackie and Pet climbed some of the larger ones, and broke off branches for decorating the house.

"How large and abundant the berries are!" said Cary, piling them carefully in the wagon. "They are as lovely as flowers! I think that is enough, Blackie dear. We don't want to mutilate the beautiful trees,—we want them to bear other years. Now let's try and find one small enough for a Christmas tree."

"Wait a minute, Miss Cary, I sees some mistletoe growin' on dat hick'ry limb," said Uncle Pompey. "Clam up in a jiffy, Pet, an' break off some bunches. Tain' no Christmas, without some mistletoe berries to hang up fur the genelmen to kiss the ladies under."

The nimble Pet soon tossed down an abundance of the green boughs with their pearly white berries, and Uncle Pompey said, as Cary was gathering them up:

"You jess stay here, Miss Cary, while me'n Marse Blackie and Pet goes down in that scrub palmetto, an' hunts fur a leetle holly tree. They ain' no use fur you an' the chillun scratchin' yo'selves, an' tearing yo' skirts in the patch."

"Not much danger of tearing this homespun skirt—but I'll stay with you, Cousin Ned," said

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Mary Sue, sitting by the lovers with a self-denying air.

"So will I," added Peachie, watching the two boys and Pompey plunge into the thicket.

"Doesn't this make you think of that day when we went sweet-gum hunting on Big Black last spring, Mary Sue?" asked Peachie.

"That it does," responded her sister. "And the cotton gin burning, and the darkies singing!"

"And Grandma and Grandpa with us then!" said Peachie, with a little catch in her voice. "How far off it seems,—and how much has happened since!"

"We have lost much, but we have much to be thankful for," said Cary, smiling at her soldier lover.

"That we have," mused Mary Sue. "The meat and sweet potatoes and molasses and other things to eat we have laid up for the winter,—and plenty of wood to burn, and clothes to wear! Did you know, Cousin Ned, that we have a big fat turkey for Christmas dinner?"

The lovers looked at each other in fulness of content, as they sat, in happy reverie, watching the flowing water and listening to the pleasant woodland sounds.

Presently Uncle Pompey came in sight, bearing a symmetrical little holly tree on his shoulder, followed by Blackie and Pet, chattering away in a high state of excitement.

"See what we have found, Cousin Ned!" cried

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Blackie, holding aloft a limp animal by its long tail.

"A possum, as I'm alive!" exclaimed Ned, with all the joy of the hunter. "How in the world did you get him without a gun, Uncle Pompey?"

"Seed him roostin' on a holly-tree limb, an' I jes nachelly let loose at him with my axe," said the old darky, showing all his white teeth in a joyous grin. "I don cotch a many a possum off'n a tree limb, with no gun whatever. I cotch one onct by his own tail, and pult him down."

"Possum and sweet taters is good enuff fur me," said Pet, gazing at it in an ecstasy of anticipation. "This is a good Christmas, shore,—Marse Ned, an' possum, too!"

They did not tarry, for there was much to be done, and Cary's quick fingers were needed for decorating the house and dressing the Christmas tree. This tree was set up in the parlor, and Mrs. Battle said:

"As our soldiers leave to-morrow evening, we'll have our Christmas tree on Christmas Eve, and Cary and I will have our hands full, decorating the house and putting the presents on the tree by night."

"To-night, Mother!" remonstrated the Colonel. "And, pray, how will you light the room, so we can see the tree, and make out what is on it? Tallow candles are a dismal makeshift for gas, and the fat pine-knots only throw a limited circle of light around the fireplace."

Mrs. Battle only waved her hand at him, with a mysterious, Mona Lisa smile, and proceeded to direct Ned and Blackie in placing the beautiful holly-boughs on the walls, and in hanging the mistletoe in the parlor and hall and dining room.

"Leave that bunch of holly, Ned," she said. "I want some for the table, and every one of us must wear a sprig of it. Come, Cary, let us shut ourselves up in the parlor, and fix the Christmas tree. And we are going to lock the door, so nobody need try to get in. Here, Peachie, I'll leave the key-basket with you and Mary Sue, so if Aunt Ginsy wants anything for supper, you can give it out to her."

They were all in holiday apparel when they gathered around the supper table that night. Mrs. Battle and Cary had the pearly mistletoe in their shining dark hair, and the children and men wore sprigs of holly-berries. Aunt Ginsy had tried herself to give them the choicest of cooking, and all did justice to it, though the children were in a fever of excitement.

Cary slipped out before it was time to rise from the table, and when they all reached the parlor, it was flooded with the soft radiance of the wax candles she had just lighted.

"Wax candles!" cried the Colonel, as jubilant as the children. "Where in the world did you get them, Mother? Did Santa Claus bring them to you?"

"They were as great a surprise to me, as if he

had," said Mrs. Battle. "I found them in a trunk filled with blankets and bed linen, which was not unpacked for some time after we got here, and I put them away for some grand occasion. I can't imagine who put them there. I know I didn't."

"'Twuz Old Miss put 'em dar," said Aunt Dilsey, pressing forward. "I reckermember now when she put 'em in 'tween dem linen sheets. Lawd, but dey does burn different from taller dips!"

"I thought she must have put them there, when I laid them away for some special occasion," said Mrs. Battle, touching one of them with loving fingers. "How glad she would be that they were lighted for you, Ned!"

"What a beautiful tree!" cried the Colonel, pressing his wife's hand in loving sympathy. "You and Cary certainly have the magic touch, Mother. But let us see what is on it! I'm simply wild to get the diamond shirt pin you have got for me."

The three children took hold of one another's hands and stepped in front of him, while Blackie presented him with a neatly folded piece of paper. The Colonel opened it and read the following lines aloud:

Father, we have no costly gift,
Nor gem of glittering shine,
No golden ore of yellow hue,
Dug from the earth's deep mine;
But we have a gift that is nobler far
Than gems from o'er the sea,
It is the love of our youthful hearts
We now present to thee.

For the gold is stained with captive's blood,
Dropped from the bursting vein,
And the gem was found 'mid dead men's bones
Far down in the glassy main.
The golden ore will tarnish soon,
And the diamond crumble away,
But our love is like a holy fire,
That never can decay.

JAMES BLACKBURN BATTLE,
MARY SUSAN BATTLE,
ANNE MARKHAM BATTLE.

"I would rather have this than the diamond pin I didn't get, or any other 'gem of glittering shine,'" said the proud father, enclosing his children in a comprehensive hug. "And did you write these lovely verses, my Blackie boy?" he asked with quizzical eyes.

"You know I can't write poetry, or anything else," said downright Blackie. "Peachie wrote them, and Mary Sue and I just signed our names."

"But they're as much our sentiments as though we had written them," said Mary Sue, giving her father a resounding kiss.

"Anne Markham Battle, I had almost forgotten you had any other name than Peachie," said the Colonel, hugging the blushing young poetess. "So that is your pen name, as well as your real name."

"I felt like I wanted to put my sure enough name to Christmas verses to you," said Peachie, receiving the congratulations of her admiring relatives.

"But here is a real 'gem of glittering shine,'" said

said Mrs. Battle, taking a box from under the tree and opening it, and fastening the lovely necklace it held around Cary's throat. "From General Loring, dear."

"A wedding present as well as a Christmas gift," said the kind General, beaming on her with delighted eyes. "I saw it in a shop in Atlanta, and thought how it would become that beautiful neck."

"And there is Ned's present for you," continued Mrs. Battle, as she was murmuring her thanks to General Loring. "An exquisite silk dress, dear. What extravagant soldiers! I'm afraid they've spent all their substance buying such things in these high-priced times."

Ned cast a comical glance at the General, for both of them had well-nigh impoverished themselves purchasing their tributes of affection and admiration.

"Oh, we've got enough to get back to Dalton," he answered gayly. "And there the Commissary department furnishes us with hard-tack and bacon. But here's something for Cousin Sally and Peachie and Mary Sue, from both of us. Our exchequer was getting low, so we chipped in together."

And he drew out from his side of the tree some pretty gifts for them.

The presents, with the exception of the soldiers' offerings, were simple, homemade things, but the joy and excitement over them was as great

as though they had been the choicest triumphs of the jeweller's art. Every one represented work and thoughtful love, and were the finest product of their needlework, knitting, and weaving. All the servants, from Uncle Abe to Manassas, were remembered, and there was no happier and more contented family in all the South than our household of refugees in this first Christmas in the land of their exile.

CHAPTER XX

Sleep sweetly in your humble graves,
Sleep, martyrs of a fallen cause;
Though yet, no marble column craves
The pilgrim here to pause.

Henry Timrod.

GENERAL LORING and Ned left on Christmas afternoon for their winter-quarters in Northern Georgia, and Cary turned a brave and smiling face to her lover for his parting kiss. Well for her that she did not know how many weary months would pass before she would see him again!

"The next time I bring him back we'll have the wedding!" cried General Loring, as they drove away in the shabby little rockaway. "Be sure and have the silk dress made and ready."

"That we will," sang back the little girls. "The necklace is ready now."

General Joseph E. Johnston superseded General Bragg in command of the Army of Tennessee on December 27th, 1863; General Sherman was already in command of the Northern Army,—so the same leaders that had fought so stubbornly at Jackson the preceding summer were again pitted against each other. The two armies lay near to each other, and there were encounters

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between them both in January and February,—with no decisive advantage on either side, however. General Johnston's main efforts were directed to strengthening his defenses and improving the condition of his men. Ned, who admired him enthusiastically, wrote to Cary at the beginning of March:

"The condition of our army is splendid in every respect; it is well fed, well clothed, in good health and spirits; for the first time since I joined it there are no barefoot soldiers. When General Johnston took command two months ago it was disheartened by the defeats in the fall campaign and on the verge of dissolution. Now I can find no word to express the extent of the change, but regeneration. He is certainly a great Captain in the science of war, but he has come into command, both here and in Mississippi under most adverse circumstances. There is every indication that the Union Army will soon make a vigorous advance into Georgia. We are, therefore, concentrating our forces, and are ready and anxious to meet them."

"Georgia is going to be the battlefield of the spring and summer," remarked the Colonel when Cary read the letter to him. "And to think that I have been assigned to a command at Mobile Bay, instead of the Army of Northern Georgia!"

The Colonel had at last been exchanged, and only the day before had received orders to report for service at Mobile. He was to leave the next morning, and after the busy day of preparation for his departure, all were sitting on the verandah, enjoying the beauty and quiet of the lovely spring evening.

"We have had you for nearly eight months," said the brave wife, "and we do not begrudge your

going to the front again,—but I am not sorry you are going to Mobile instead of Georgia.”

“I suspect I can be of more service at Mobile,” said the Colonel. “They think my experience at Vicksburg will make me helpful in strengthening and superintending the defenses there. Farragut was there reconnoitering in the winter, and boasted that he could take the forts and the city with a single ironclad and five thousand men. I’ll venture to say he’ll not find it as easy a job as he expects.”

“How I wish Ned were with you!” sighed Cary. “If he should be wounded, there is no one nearer to him than General Loring,—and he is a new friend, and has so many duties besides.”

“Oh, this busy day!” cried the Colonel, plucking a letter out of his pocket. “I got this letter from Mr. Baskett in the morning’s mail, and he writes that he was exchanged in the winter, and has been at Meridian ever since, working in the hospital there,—that he got tired of it, and wrote to General Loring for a position, and that he has found him a place, so that he is starting for Georgia immediately.”

“Oh, I am so glad!” exclaimed Cary. “He is devoted to Ned, and will look after him, if anything should happen to him. How I wish he could stop by and see us on his way there!”

“He won’t have time,—his orders are to report for service at once,” answered the Colonel. Then, after musing awhile, he added: “Well, it has been

a blessing that I have been able to be with you, during these days of moving and settling in a new home. And now that most of our crops are in, and the garden nearly made, we have no right to complain that the call has come to go to the wars again. I am sure that my Blackie boy will be of great help to his mother."

"I'll try to," said the boy, looking earnestly in his father's face. "I'm in my fourteenth year now, and I ought to be of some help. Boys have gone to the war no older than I am."

A quiet smile passed around the family circle, for they had celebrated his thirteenth birthday only the week before. Gently and gravely his father said:

"You have as hard a battle to fight, my son, as though you were wearing your country's uniform and fighting under your country's flag. You must look after this little farm, just as you have seen me do, and see that your mother and aunt and sisters do not lack any needed thing."

"I'm glad," said the boy seriously, "that the two old sows have good litters of pigs, and both the cows have calves."

"And four of the hens and one turkey are setting," chimed in practical Mary Sue. "And we are getting plenty of eggs now."

"Don't be anxious about us, Charlton," said Mrs. Battle. "I'm sure we shall manage all right. We have learned how to adjust ourselves to our refugee life. I know that the months that are past

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were more difficult for us than those that are to come."

"The fish in the creek are biting finely now," observed Cary, who was an ardent fisherman, "and I'll bargain that Lilian and I can supply a daily mess for the table."

"The servants seem perfectly contented," said the Colonel, "and Abe and Pompey and Brown have promised me to be faithful to you, and take good care of everything. We have done the best we know how, Mother, and now as we part, let us cast all our cares on the Good Father, who cares for us, and will supply all our needs."

While he was speaking the full spring moon rose, and as it floated slowly up the rose-tinted eastern sky, a mocking bird burst into a very ecstasy of song. It was a picture that remained in the good soldier's mind for many a day after—the dear ones grouped about his chair, the pretty little home, bathed in silvery light, the unseen bird, pouring out its very heart in rapturous melody.

Colonel Battle left early next morning, and though every soul missed his genial presence, yet all showed only brave and cheerful faces to one another. The children went to school as usual, Mrs. Battle and Cary followed their daily round, the servants performed their appointed tasks with even more zeal than usual.

And so the busy spring months slipped by. All the Battles' ventures on the little farm prospered, and their simple wants were amply supplied. Their

homely fare and quiet life agreed with them; and all their household, both white and black, had the boon of perfect health. All were now clad in homespun,—except on rare occasions,—and Mrs. Battle's and Cary's skillful fingers made even this coarse cloth into tasteful and becoming garments. The palmetto hats, which they made themselves and trimmed with odds and ends of silk and ribbon and lace, were greatly admired by their friends.

Mrs. Battle had given the young girl the finest of her linen sheets, and these she was fashioning into dainty garments, beautiful with embroidery and hemstitching, to be ready for the time when Ned should claim her for his bride. This was recreation to Cary and was only indulged in after she had helped with the family sewing and knitting.

Often she sewed her long, white seams with a heavy heart, for Sherman's long-expected advance into Georgia had begun in April, and every defensible point from Dalton to Atlanta was the scene of a fierce battle.

During the four months from the opening of the campaign to the fall of Atlanta in September, Mrs. Battle and Cary never knew a day free from anxiety and heartsickness. In all that long time there was almost constant fighting somewhere on the line of the great armies. General Sherman's forces greatly outnumbered those of General Johnston, but the Southern army stubbornly

contested every step of the way. However, in spite of the masterly tactics of General Johnston and the splendid courage of his soldiers, the Confederates gradually lost ground, retreating southwards until, in the middle of July, they had reached Atlanta.

Ned Chichester was in many of the hardest fought battles,—he was not allowed again “to listen to the music of the guns without firing a shot,” as at Chickamauga. Having behaved with conspicuous gallantry at Kennesaw Mountain, he had been promoted to the rank of Colonel and put in command of a regiment; and Mr. Baskett had been made his Chaplain.

While he would telegraph to Cary after each engagement, as soon as he could get use of the wires,—often there were long hours and days of sickening suspense in regard to his fate. The good preacher was most kind in writing to those waiting women, who took great comfort in his watchful care over Ned.

An indignant letter from Atlanta reached Mrs. Battle and Cary the middle of July, telling of the removal of General Johnston and the appointment of Gen. John B. Hood to the command of the Southern forces. Then followed the vain struggle of a month and a half, with its terrible loss of life, and the fall and evacuation of Atlanta on September 2nd.

During the spring and part of the summer Mobile was unmolested, and the hearts at home were

at ease about their beloved soldier there; but early in August Admiral Farragut appeared in front of the two forts at the entrance of Mobile Bay, with a large fleet. After a desperate battle, in which one of his vessels was sunk, the forts were finally captured, but the city was not taken. Colonel Battle was in the engagement, but retreated safely to Mobile after the capture of the forts, and all of the following fall and winter was in command of the defenses on the eastern shore of the Bay. As Mobile was comparatively near to Tuskegee they kept hoping that he would be able to come home from time to time; but though there was no considerable battle until the siege of Mobile in the spring of sixty-five, his duties were very exacting (for constant vigilance was necessary to prevent a sudden attack and surprise from the enemy, now in possession of the two forts at the entrance of the Bay) and the hopes of the family bore no fruit.

After the fall of Atlanta their hopes of seeing Ned grew fainter and fainter, as General Hood's army retreated to the east and north, always farther away from them. Late in the winter a jubilant note came from him, saying that the brigade to which his regiment was attached had been ordered to join the Army of Virginia, and he added:

"The dream of my life has been to serve under that peerless commander and great and good man, Gen. Robert E. Lee,—and it is now to be realized."

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And so, the long and anxious days of the fall of sixty-four and the winter of sixty-five dragged by with our refugees. Their personal privations gave them no concern,—they were constantly thankful that things were no worse with them. While their food was mostly the homely things that they raised on their farm, and their clothing was homespun and homemade, yet they suffered no real lack. Their servants were faithful and attached, and they made many friends among the warm-hearted and cultured people of their neighborhood and of Tuskegee. Their anxiety and heartaches were all for their dear ones fighting their country's battles, and for the threatening clouds that were hanging over their beloved land. They met their daily duties and responsibilities with as brave a heart as any soldier in the fast-dwindling Southern forces,—fighting against overwhelming odds in these closing days of the Confederacy.

And so again, as at the beginning of this little chronicle:

"Its mist of green o'er battle plain
Fair Spring had breathed,"—

the memorable and fateful spring of eighteen hundred and sixty-five, with ominous mutterings of storm and disaster on every side!

Ned's letters from the Army of Virginia were necessarily infrequent, because of uncertain telegraphic and railroad facilities; but in spite of con-

stant hardship and recurring defeat, his words to those at home showed the courage and fidelity of the devoted patriot and fearless soldier. As soon as he saw General Lee, he made an entire surrender of his whole heart to him, and the great leader became Ned Chichester's lifelong ideal of a man, a citizen, and a soldier,—even his beloved General Johnston had to take a second place in his affections. He was full of pride when he wrote late in the winter, of General Lee's being made Commander-in-Chief of the whole Confederate Army, and added in his enthusiastic, poetic way:

"Commander of our hearts as well as of our bodies."

The campaign in Virginia opened before the close of winter, and during February, March, and half of April, our refugees sat, as it were, in the very shadow of death. The news of the swiftly-recurring battles would generally reach them quickly, but the tidings from the dear soldier would tarry, and often there were days, sometimes lengthening into weeks, while they were in heart-breaking suspense as to his fate.

In the latter part of March another pang, another burden, was added to their crushing load, for Mobile was besieged, and for seventeen days was fiercely cannonaded. This was the darkest time of the whole war to Mrs. Battle and Cary.

"I cannot hear the guns of Mobile as I did those of Vicksburg," said the anxious wife. "I sometimes wish I could,—it would be a sign that

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Charlton was nearer. Now and then I feel so desperate that I think I must leave you all and go there. It is not besieged by land, as Vicksburg was, and is open from the rear."

"O Sister, what would we do without you!" cried Cary, falling into sudden and bitter weeping.

"I know I couldn't leave you all," answered Mrs. Battle, clasping the young girl in her arms, in one of her rare embraces. "And what a care I should be to Charlton in Mobile! Forgive me, child, for thinking even for a moment of deserting you all. I know my post of duty is here, just as Ned's is in Virginia, and Charlton's in that poor beleaguered city."

CHAPTER XXI

Take that banner down—'tis tattered,
Broken is its staff and shattered,
And the valiant hosts are scattered,
Over whom it floated high.
Oh, 'tis hard for us to fold it,
Hard to think there's none to hold it,
Hard that those who once unrolled it,
Now must furl it with a sigh!

Father Ryan.

EARLY in April rumors came that a large Union Army under General James H. Wilson was approaching Montgomery, seemingly bound for Macon, Georgia. The rumors quickly became a certainty, and as Tuskegee was on the highway both to Columbus and Macon, Mrs. Battle and Cary knew that they were again doomed to look grim war in the face, as they had two years before.

The Battle farm was on the road the army must travel, and again they began the old work of secreting their silver and jewels. The negro men hid and buried these valuables as before, and there was no fear of the faithful creatures' betraying their trust. The spirits of both Mrs. Battle and Cary rose in the bustle of preparation; it was far easier for them to face perils and difficulties themselves, than to sit and think of their best beloved exposed to danger and death.

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Colonel Battle had taken Prince to Mobile with him, but the family still had Cary's mare and their beautiful carriage horses, and Uncle Pompey and Pet were to take them to a little backwoods farm, six or seven miles from the route of the Northern Army. All the darkies gathered to bid them good-bye, and both the old coachman and Pet felt their importance keenly.

"Does you reckon ole Miss Doggins'll let you stay on her farm?" asked Aunt Ginsy, gazing on her son,—who was sitting very erect on the mare,—with ill-concealed pride.

"Miss Doggins she's a cracker, en she dips snuff, en she sez, 'youens en weuns,' but she's all right," returned Uncle Pompey. "We got our chickens and turkeys fum her, an' she never fooled us once. Pore white ez she is, I never seen a mo' nicer woman. She'll take us in shore."

"Brer Brown and Me'll be startin' off soon with the cows en hogs en ez many chickens en turkeys ez we kin ketch," struck in Uncle Abe, a little restive at the horsemen's receiving so much attention. "We done got the pens fixt in a big palmetter patch down by the creek. I lay nobody kin find us, or if dey does, dey can't git thoo dem bushes, 'thout scratchin' dey skins off."

As Tom dutifully held one of the horses, while his father mounted the other, the old darky said impressively:

"Mine, boy, an' take good keer er Miss Sally

an' the family—you's the onliest man on the place now."

"Better tell Miss Sally to take keer er him," said Peggy, giggling pertly.

"Shet yo' sassy mouth," retorted Tom, gazing at her admiringly. "When we's married, I'll kiss you ever time you makes them flirtified 'sponses."

The place felt quite lonely when the men had departed with the livestock and poultry. The house faced the road along which the Union Army must pass, being set about one hundred feet back. The children had not been going to school since the news of the raid had come, and they were all sitting on the front verandah. Manassas, now grown into a sturdy little chap, was riding a stick-horse up and down the front pavement, and Lillian, sitting on the steps, was supposed to be keeping a vigilant eye on him, to see that he didn't run out of the gate,—for he was an inveterate runaway. All,—except Blackie,—were knitting for dear life.

"How this makes me think of that May day, nearly two years ago, when we all sat on the porch at Jackson, waiting for General Grant's army to come in!" said Cary. "I remember how peaceful and lovely everything looked. Don't you, Sister?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Mrs. Battle. "How much has happened! What changes have come since then!"

"If we only knew that Ned and brother were

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safe!" sighed the young girl. "They seem to have been fighting continuously in Virginia, and I have not had a word from Ned for a week,—and the letter had been several days on the way."

"Since General Wilson's raid reached Montgomery, the telegraphic connection with Mobile has been broken off, and I have not heard from Charlton," said Mrs. Battle. "How I miss his daily telegram! How much may have happened in these three days!"

"Where is that mischeevous chile?" cried Lilian, jumping up and looking around. "You, Man-assas, whar is you?"

And she and Peachie ran down the walk, looking for him, and when they reached the gate they saw him prancing and capering down the big road on his stick-horse. Having overtaken him, Lilian gave him a sound shaking, whereupon he said cheerfully:

"I gwine see music and drums."

"Bless my soul, if he hasn't got the best ears in the family!" cried Peachie, listening intently. "Yes, I do hear the bands playing. Sure as you are born, Lilian, the Yankees have come to Tuskegee."

Lilian caught the chubby little fellow up in her arms, and the two girls raced back to the house, where they told the great news. When they stopped talking all could now hear the faint blasts of horns and trumpets on the still air. The negroes came flocking around from the back-yard,

and Aunt Ginsy said proudly, as she gave her youngest born a sounding smack on his lips:

"You's de man er dis house, keepin' de lookout, while dat lazy Tom is sparkin' roun' Peggy."

"'Pears like he was runnin' off to jine the enemy," retorted Tom, a little nettled at the thrust at his vigilance.

"No chile er mine runs away fum his white folks while dey's in trouble," replied Aunt Ginsy with emphasis. "Miss Sally, how long 'fore you specks dey'll be comin' 'long dis-er way?"

"It will only take the cavalry a short time to ride the two miles from town, if they do not stop there awhile," answered her mistress. "I know you all would like to be here with us when the troops begin to pass. Go and shut up the kitchen and cabins, and come and sit on the side porch."

Aunt Ginsy, Aunt Dilsey, and Mammy Viney soon fastened all the houses in the rear as securely as possible, and trooped up on the verandah at the side, just back of where the family were sitting. They had finished their dinner, and in the suspense of waiting, even the unresting knitting-needles lay idle in their laps.

It was a peerless mid-April afternoon, and their little refugee home was at its prettiest. Vines were climbing over the broad verandahs, and shrubs and rose-bushes, which Uncle Brown's skillful hands had rescued from death, were in full bloom. The mocking birds, red birds, and brown thrashers were singing with all their

might, and Mrs. Battle could not but feel a pang of fear that this home might suffer a like fate to the beloved one in Mississippi.

The far-off strains of military music grew clearer; presently the group on the verandah could hear the throb of drums, then gradually a dull, heavy sound, which they recognized as the tramp of many horses' feet, muffled by the deep sand of the road. As it grew nearer, Mrs. Battle took Blackie's arm, Cary and the two girls followed, and they went outside of the front gate, and waited for the approaching horsemen. She saw by their uniforms that they were officers of rank,—evidently a General and his staff. They were considerably in advance of the main body of troops, and were riding along in a leisurely way, as though enjoying the beauty and peace of the spring afternoon. When the little group at the gate advanced toward them, the leader of the troop reined up his horse, took off his hat, and waited for Mrs. Battle to speak.

"General," she said, "we are a household of women and children; my son here is our only protector. We are refugees from Jackson, Mississippi, and know something of the havoc that war carries. We are venturing to ask that you will give us a guard, to protect us while the army is passing."

"The men of your family," asked the officer, "are they all away in the Southern army?"

"My father was killed at Jackson," she an-

swered. "My husband is in Mobile, and my adopted brother is in Virginia, with General Lee."

The General glanced at the two beautiful women, at the handsome children, with the plain marks of gentle breeding on all, and gave an order to one of his staff, then said kindly:

"Captain Ward will see that a trusty man is left with you, to remain until the army has passed by."

He seemed so unhurried, and looked so friendly, that Mrs. Battle was encouraged to ask:

"We have had no word either from Mobile or Virginia for several days, and we are full of anxiety. Could you tell us, if there is any recent news?"

"Mobile surrendered yesterday. General Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox on the ninth of April. The war is all but over."

The shock of surprise was so great that Mrs. Battle reeled and clung to Blackie, and the boy passed his arm protectingly around her. The General saw how overwhelmed the two ladies were, and with perfect tact and courtesy bowed to them, spurred his horse, and he and his staff cantered down the road.

The main body of troops had not yet come up, and Mrs. Battle and Cary clasped each other in a close embrace. Then fell into bitter weeping,—the three children looking on wonderingly at

the rare spectacle of their courageous mother in tears. At length Blackie put his arm around her shoulders, drew her to him, and said tenderly:

"We must go back to the house, Mammy dear; the troops are coming,—they must not see you crying."

As Mrs. Battle sank into her chair on the verandah, she said in a voice broken with sobs:

"How often I have said and wished that this cruel war was over!—and now, when the end seems to have come, it almost breaks my heart. Four years of struggle and sacrifice,—thousands of precious lives laid down for their country,—and all for naught! Oh, the bitterness, the humiliation of defeat!"

Cary, who sat at her sister-in-law's feet, with her head buried in her lap, said in a stifled voice:

"If we only knew of brother and Ned! I can stand anything, if they are but spared to us!"

In their absorption in their own sorrow at this sudden and crushing tidings, the passing Northern army, with its banners and pealing music, and tramping thousands, was a matter of little importance. It was not till Blackie touched his mother that she looked up and saw a tall, kindly-looking man in the Union blue standing before her, that she roused herself.

"I've been detailed by General Croxton," he said, touching his cap, "to act as a guard for you while the army is passing."

Mechanically she thanked him, and Blackie

took the soldier's knapsack from him, and led him into the guest-room, lavishing all the little courtesies on him that a finished host could show to an honored friend.

The Northern army was passing for two days, and to Mrs. Battle's anxious, bleeding heart it was but as a dream,—an idle pageant. The first night some prowling soldiers came in the yard, but a few words from their guard and the showing of an order signed with a general's name made them beat a hasty retreat. The guard was most considerate and unobtrusive, and became a fast friend of the children during his stay with them. He did not leave until the last of the army was passing, and the parting was marked by many mutual expressions of regard and remembrance.

As they all sat in the front of the house, watching the disappearing column of soldiers, Mary Sue cried suddenly:

"There are two men climbing the fence and coming across the lower part of the yard. I bet they are Yankee stragglers come back to 'forage,' as they call it. Oh, I wish our guard had not gone!"

Blackie dashed down toward the intruders, and he was heard to give a cry as he disappeared behind a clump of shrubbery. Coming soon again into view, he was seen to be walking with his captives, clinging to one of them. Without a word,

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Cary flew across the yard, and in a moment was clasped in the soldier's arms.

It was Ned and Mr. Baskett! They had come into Tuskegee that morning, and had thought best to remain discreetly in the background until the Union army had passed out of sight.

"Not that we have anything to fear," said the preacher, kissing and shaking hands promiscuously. "We are both honorably discharged from the Army of Virginia, and have our parole papers in our pockets. But we were afraid we might be detained, in order to go before some of their big-bugs,—there is so much red tape in the army."

"We felt that it would break our hearts to wait a minute longer," said Ned, embracing Mrs. Battle and the girls, and beginning with Cary again. "How blessed to be with you all again!"

"God is good to spare our lives," rang the preacher's deep voice. "We have been fighting almost constantly from the middle of February to the surrender at Appomattox a week ago; and here we are safe and sound,—and here you are looking like angels to us! And,—bless my soul,—here is a letter from the Colonel that we got out of the post-office as we were prowling round Tuskegee!"

Mrs. Battle seized the letter, tore it open, devoured the few lines telling of her husband's safety and speedy return, and then,—for the first and only time in her life,—fainted quietly on

Ned's shoulder. The ravages of suspense and anxiety, the sudden shock of the news of the downfall of the Confederacy, and the crowning touch of joy were too much even for her stout heart.

But she soon came to herself, and from that time no word of murmuring at the crumbling of all her patriotic hopes ever passed her lips. The humiliation of defeat, the vanishing of all dreams of her country's independence, was swallowed up in the beatitude of dear ones spared after four years of battle and carnage.

When Colonel Battle came home the next evening, the rapture of the meeting was past all speech. To the wife, he was all that one human being can be to another, to the children he was friend as well as father,—and they had not looked on his face for more than a year!

But even this moment of perfect joy and harmony had its inevitable minor chord. When Ned and Mr. Baskett told their pathetic and heroic story of the surrender of the Army of Virginia a sudden quiet fell on them, and when the children saw a shadow fall on their father's genial face, and big tears rolling down his cheeks, an awe and a wondering seized them, and they realized that they were looking into depths too profound to be penetrated by their understanding.

"General Lee is not only the greatest general of the war, he is still our leader in peace," said Ned. "Some of us felt the bitterness of defeat

so keenly that we went to him and asked him to lead a colony to Mexico; and I shall never forget the gentle rebuke of his answer: 'The South needs the aid of her sons now more than ever before. I, for one, shall share her fate and struggle for her restoration, rather than give up all as lost.' "

"He's a better Christian than I am," confessed the preacher. "I felt so hard and bitter toward the Yankees when the end came that I said in my haste that I wouldn't stay in a country ruled by them, but would volunteer as a foreign missionary. Fine spirit for a soldier of the Cross, —wasn't it? But General Lee has shown us the more excellent way."

The Colonel wiped his eyes (quite openly), saying:

"The General is right. We have fought a good fight. No man can say but what we have given the crowning proof of love for our country,—we have been willing to lay down our lives for its sake. There is no dishonor in such a defeat as ours."

He paused a moment, looked on the dear faces around him, broke into one of his irresistible smiles, and said cheerfully:

"We must forget the things' that are behind and begin our new war,—the battle for bread and meat and raiment. For my part, I have so little malice to the Northern people that I am trying to think of some way that I can make

money from them. All the Southern people are as poor as we are, so there's no chance to make anything out of them."

Ned and Cary had been whispering apart, and now the young soldier ventured:

"Colonel, Cary and I think we would like to begin the new campaign together. We have waited for two years, and we would like to be married immediately and go to Mississippi together to start life on my plantation. I can probably get some of our old negroes to work for me; and if I can't, I've got a pair of good, strong arms myself. And it's late for plowing now,—so there's no time to waste."

Colonel and Mrs. Battle could not say them nay; when it was announced that a quiet wedding would take place in a few days, Tom waylaid Uncle Abe, as he was returning with his livestock and poultry from the creek, to beg that he and Peggy might be married at the same time.

"You know," he urged, with characteristic shrewdness, "bein' free jess means you're free to make yo' livin', an' it'll be all you kin do to skirmish aroun' an' buy vittles an' close fur Aunt Ginsy and Lilian an' Manassas,—to say nothin' er Pet. You better let me take keer er Peggy; she's an awful big eater, an' mighty hard on her close."

This ingenious and unromantic argument won the fight for Tom, and the stern father gave a grudging consent.

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None beside the family was to be present at the marriage, but on the day of the wedding, an unexpected and welcome guest walked up to the front door. It was General Loring, who, after receiving his discharge, had come to tell them good-bye before leaving his native land.

"I've never been anything but a soldier," he said, after their delighted greetings were over, "and I couldn't serve in the United States Army, even if they'd give me a commission,—which they wouldn't. There's fighting in Egypt, and I'm going over there to offer my services to the Khedive. My greatest regret in leaving this country is parting with you all."

There was no handsomer couple in all the land than Ned and Cary as they stood before Mr. Baskett, and heard the solemn words that made them man and wife. The good preacher was much moved, and spoke with impressive tenderness. In his closing prayer he extended his hands over them—and then the little company noted that they were clothed in a pair of black kid gloves! Where he had procured them remained an unsolved mystery, for no one ever dared to ask him. He evidently plumed himself greatly on this novel article of bridal attire, and kept them on,—and well to the front,—when he married Peggy and Tom afterward, as well as all during the wedding breakfast. And the last thing that Ned and Cary saw, as they drove away into the

new life, was a pair of large black hands waving vigorously after them.

The Colonel, gazing down the white, sandy road after the pair till they had passed up the long hill and over its crest, out of sight, said with a half sigh:

"My little sister! How I wish I could have smoothed the hard road she and Ned will have to travel! But it is the way all of us will have to journey, so as to make the New South what it can and must be."

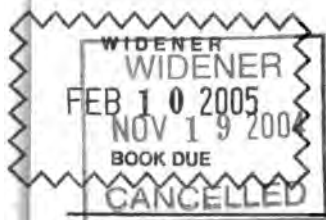
"Have no misgivings about the road over which that young couple will travel, and waste no sympathy on them. Love will make their burdens light, and smooth all the rough places in the long journey they will take together. If you have tears to shed, weep over forlorn and lonely bachelors, like General Loring and myself," quoth the preacher, at last taking off his bridal gloves and putting them proudly in his pocket.

THE END

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